# **Communications and Advocacy Strategy 2021 – 2025**

United Nations in North Macedonia

**Prepared by UN Communications Group**

## **Context**

The United Nations in North Macedonia has defined ambitious goals to improve the quality of life for all people in the country by: improving living standards; improving the access and the quality of basic services (education, health, social services); enhancing climate action; and by improving policy development and implementation.

Guided by the key strategic document of the UN in the country – the UN Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework (SDCF) 2021 – 2025 (developed in close partnership with the Government of the Republic of North Macedonia), the UN Country Team will seek to enhance the delivery as one, further strengthening the position and the brand of the UN as a driver of change in the Sustainable Development Agenda.

Having the priorities of the SDCF fully aligned with the national priorities and recognising that EU membership is a key national priority, the UNCT will seek to strengthen partnerships for Sustainable Development and mobilise greater engagement in the realisation of the nationally set Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

Recognising that communication is not merely a supportive activity for programme implementation only, but a proven method to streamline the achievement of the set goals, solutions-based communication will be needed in three directions:

* Communicating to enhance the visibility of the UN activities and improve the brand recognition of the UN in the country;
* Communicating to build partnerships on the Sustainable Development Goals.
* Communicating to mobilise support for the Sustainable Development Agenda.

### The UN Country Team (UNCT)

The UNCT is comprised of heads and representatives of UN Funds, Programmes and Specialized Agencies, the Bretton-Woods Institutions. The work of the UNCT is being coordinated through the Office of the UN Resident Coordinator.

### Delivering as One

The UNCT elected to embrace the “Delivering as One” approach with the “Partnership for Sustainable Development: United Nations Strategy for 2016-2020” and will continue to build on that experience throughout all activities undertaken in the implementation of UN SDCF 2021 - 2025.

Recognising that all UN agencies have advocacy and communication activities and strategies in their own mandate, this strategy seeks to ensure that the principle of delivering as one is respected in both, individual and in joint activities.

### The UN in the country:

International Labour Organisation (ILO)

International Organisation for Migration (IOM)

Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO)

United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)

United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction (UNDRR)

United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO)

United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE)

United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP)

United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA)

UN Habitat

United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR)

United Nations Children Fund (UNICEF)

United Nations Industrial Development Organisation (UNIDO)

United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC)

United Nations Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR)

United Nations Office for Project Services (UNOPS)

UN Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN Women)

United Nations Volunteers (UNV)

World Health Organisation (WHO)

The World Bank

International Monetary Fund (IMF)

## **Vision**

#### Long term vision

Communicating for a World Where Everyone Thrives in Peace, Dignity and Equality on a Healthy Planet.

#### Five-year period vision

Mobilize support for the Sustainable Development Agenda, fight inequality, stand for inclusion, build resilience, and improve the quality of lives and outcomes for all current and future generations.

## **Objectives**

The goal of this strategy is to define the ways how the UN Communications Group (UNCG) will support North Macedonia in achieving the results outlined in the UN Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework (SDCF) 2021 – 2025.

* **Internal Communication**

Building on the “Communicating as one” approach, the UNCG will seek to develop a unified voice among UN agencies and issues of joint concern, and to increase the visibility of the UN and its agencies by:

* Improving UNCG coordination through: introducing regular monthly meetings; continue ad-hoc meetings of the UNCG in its entirety or in task groups as needed; create quick/chat group (Viber, Signal)
* Improve regular planning by introducing annual priority themes and action plan in addition to the workplan;
* Enhance the capacity of the UNCG with training on specific needs where gaps are determined;
* Enhance training options for all UN staff on communication topics to streamline internal and external communication.
* Amplify the collective voice of the UN through individual agency communication activities and strategies.

Target audiences: UNCG, UNCT, All-UN Staff

* **External Communication**

To increase efficiency in delivering the desired results from the communication and advocacy activities, the UNCG will seek to:

* Improve the UN branding, focusing on getting better understanding of “what we do” and why it is important in the lives of the people in North Macedonia;
* Strengthen the UN as a trustworthy, knowledgeable, driver of the sustainable development agenda;
* Make clearly understandable communication of what the goals of the SDCF (and the Agenda 2030) are and how they reflect on people’s lives, as a method to increase people’s engagement in the achievement of the desired results, as outlined in the SDCF;
* Enhance relations with partners, stakeholders, media and individuals that can amplify the messages of the UN

Target audiences: Government, municipalities, public institutions, donors, civil society, academia, media and general public.

## **Themes**

### Priority themes

Guided by the most important joint strategic document, the UN Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework (SDCF) 2021 – 2025, a total of 18 agencies will seek to help the country in:

1. Improving the living standard of the people through equal access to decent work and productive employment generated by an inclusive and innovative business environment;
2. Securing universal access to rights-based quality social services – healthcare, education, and necessary social and child protection – rooted in system resilient to emergencies;
3. Implementing ambitious climate action, allowing people to benefit from more sustainably managed natural resources and well – preserved biodiversity through good environmental governance and disaster resilient communities;
4. Improving rule of law, evidence based, anticipatory and gender-responsive policies, greater social cohesion, and effective service delivery by transparent, accountable and responsive institutions.

priority themes: **Mobilize for the Planet; Fight Inequality, Stand for Inclusion; Realize Gender Equality.**

## Crisis/Emergencies and Ad-Hoc themes

Due to the immense influence of the COVID-19 pandemic on people’s lives and the development of the country, the UNCG will seek to continue providing support to the country in communicating:

* Best-known tactics in mitigating risks associated with COVID-19;
* Importance of vaccination for dampening the risk to the health of individuals, the stability of the health system and the socio-economic recovery;
* How to deal with long-term effect of COVID-19.

The support will be provided both, through the group and through separate UN agencies, based on their capacity and their involvement in the COVID-19 response. The specific role of each of the agencies will be defined and coordinated through the UNCG. Another rising communication related demand is the *“fake news”* phenomena which can curb the effects of the overall UN activities and reputation. Therefore, the UNCG will continuously monitor the misinformation and strive to dampen the effects by proactive informing, transparent working and consistent communication. This will be primarily done through the monitoring tools available, but individual cases noted via other channels will be diligently adressed as well.

Based on the experience of the communication and advocacy activities initiated and implemented in response to the pandemic, the UNCG will continue to analyze potential themes/crisis outside the primary focus themes and install the practice as part of the annual planning.

## **Tactics**

Regular communication, defined in detail by the UNCG annual workplan**:**

* Press conferences, Press Releases, Media briefings
* Interviews, statements and specialized media products
* UN website, UN Agencies’ websites
* UN Social Media, UN Agencies’ social media
* Sustainable Development Bulletin
* Conferences, presentations, lectures, seminars, workshops;
* Communications/Advocacy campaigns

Advanced storytelling

* Introduce innovative methods of storytelling such through gamification, interactive narrative, investigation, documentary, podcasts, vlogs…

Capacity development:

* Organize guest appearances on lectures, debates and workshops on the Agenda 2030
* Establish cooperation with journalism faculties/schools
* Create celebrity/Influencer network
* Enhance journalistic network

Improved media monitoring:

* Explore, evaluate and implement improved options for more detailed media monitoring reports
* Explore, evaluate and implement new options for social media “listening” services

## **Messages**

The UNCG will work together on a regular basis with the UNCT to develop common, consistent, solutions-based communication on key issues where the UN is active in the country.

“Communicating as One” will help the positioning of the UN and its vision at the country level, seeking to:

* Use authoritative information to spread knowledge and inoculate against misinformation;
* Strengthen the outreach of the UN system by pooling efforts;
* Build credibility, trust and familiarity with the UN and its values;
* Speak out in a timely and principled manner, using understandable, impactful and bold messaging;
* Build empathy and mobilise action by storytelling that offers ideas for personal involvement;
* Avoid message duplication, inconsistencies and fragmentation.

### Communication activities

**Based on the annual workplan:**

* UNCG facilitates the identification of key advocacy messages for the UN and develops an information kit and/or a joint calendar of advocacy events and special occasions, and/or appropriate communication tools;
* UNCG promotes issue-based communication ensuring the synergy of information, messages and branding, and identifies areas for shared results and development themes, such as human rights and gender equality.
* UNCG identifies new and innovative ways to demonstrate how UN programmes are delivering results;
* UNCG alerts the UNCT on sensitive issues that require close monitoring;
* In a crisis or emergency context, the UNCG supports the UNCT in managing information and messages, both internally and externally.

## **Channels**

To ensure that our communication has most impact on our audiences, the UNCG will use all, combined or specific communication channels, based on the form of the message that is most probable to yield best results. The following communication channels have been defined as most important for the period 2021 - 2025:

* Traditional media
* Local media
* Stakeholders and partners
* Amplifiers (Influencers, celebrities)
* Social media

## **Crisis Communication**

Based on the global Standard operating procedures for crisis communication, the UN CG will prepare a:

* Set of information for all UN staff
* Communication protocols on an agency and UN wide level
* Form crisis communication core team and organize intra group training for the rest
* Assist in dealing with misinformation targeting UN and UN entities
* Advise on needs for prompt reaction to targeted messaging affecting the UN and UN entities

## **Innovation**

* To further enhance the efficiency of its communication and advocacy activities, the UNCG will seek innovative methods to implement specific communication and advocacy activities, for joint initiatives, but also to be available as a resource for individual (Agency level) communication initiatives. Creative labs – campaign labs
* Behaviour design (research, message testing, planning, implementation)
* Youth engagement – partnership with faculties, debate clubs, youth SDG advocates,

## **Implementation and monitoring**

The UNCG is in charge of implementation of the UNCT Communications and Advocacy Strategy and activities set in the Annual UNCG Work plan, and approved by UNCT. The UNCG will hold regular monthly meetings to coordinate and ad-hoc meetings to answer emerging needs. Annual retreat of the UNCG will be used to update the Strategy, review activities of the UNCG group, and develop an annual work plan.

The UNCG will monitor the implementation of the Joint Communications Strategy through the implementations of annual UNCG workplans and update it accordingly. The monitoring will be done on a continuous basis to allow UNCG to act accordingly and modify the communications approach if not yielding expected results.

Several tools that will be used to evaluate communications activities as defined by the UNCG, including:

* A quantitative and qualitative analysis of media clipping
* A quantitative and qualitative analysis of UN web and Social Media Channels
* Annual internal needs assessment for communication targeting UN staff.

These mechanisms will be available for use to all UN agencies for their own monitoring of communication plans and strategies.

## **Budget**

The budget proposal will be defined during the development of the annual work plan, which will be presented to the UNCT for approval at the beginning of every year. Resources for joint communications activities may also be considered through cost‐sharing modality by the UN agencies, as well as through targeted fund-raising.

## **Reporting**

The UNCG Chairperson reports to the UNCT on behalf of the UNCG.