

Transcript of GFDD's first Global Roundtable with His Excellency, Ambassador Cujba, Permanent Representative of the Republic of Moldova to the United Nations.

Natasha Despotovic: (GFDD Executive Director)

Question #1

I would like you then to address Moldova as a young country. What are the lessons-learned, what were the biggest challenges, and what ones do you think have been overcome successfully?

Ambassador Alexandru Cujba: (Republic of Moldova)

Response #1

Yes, you mentioned that obviously Moldova is a young country. Obviously 20 years cannot be compared with countries which have centuries-old histories that went through different changes and reforms. We are trying to have in maybe another 10 years to attain the results that have been achieved by many other democracies around the world. Our biggest challenge was to change the mentality of people because being in an authoritarian country, being state controlled actually diminished significantly the interior liberty of people and their desire to be creative and openly express views, so this process of change took us some time.

I want to emphasize we learnt a lot, it's one of the new countries of the world that ensured the transition of power from one party to another and one president to another as a result of elections. Of course, we still have a lot to learn since in 2009 and 2010 we had two rounds of parliamentary elections, so again there are deficiencies in our political system that we still have to work on.

On the other hand the transition from closed economy to a market economy, that has been the biggest challenge because we had to privatize the whole industry in Moldova -- people started to work on their own, using old connections, old knowledge of old markets and also to discovering new markets where competition is tough. And for Moldova, in transforming its economy, it is really difficult to get access to those new markets, so for Moldova, maintaining those old positions, old markets and opening new ones in order to allow Moldovan products to be known in the world and ensure the quality is another challenge. So, economic development, would also be one of the biggest challenges.

And also the place of Moldova in the World -- from the year of 2007 when Romania joined the European Union (EU), Moldova became a neighbor of the EU. The idea of EU integration, the goal of being part of the Union became a common task for 90% of our political parties and also the people expressed their full support of EU integration. So, we are working hard on modernizing our laws and standards in accordance with EU standards and also advancing changes in Moldova Society -- that is the biggest challenge for us with the ultimate goal of EU integration.

Asuncion Sanz: (GFDD Director – office in Washington DC)

Question #2

Following what you were saying about integration of the EU, how do you envision the participation of Moldova in the EU. What would it represent to the country and what could Moldovan integration in the EU bring about to the Union?

Ambassador Alexandru Cujba: (Republic of Moldova)

Response #2

I think that integration to the EU is a 2 way process. It is not only the desire of Moldova to join the EU but also the acceptance of the EU of Moldova as a future member. On the other hand, adhering to the European standards, to the norms of the EU, it is a really beneficial process for Moldova. We have the experience, as I mentioned, of the former Soviet Union and we know how well it is to like in an authoritarian state and how it is to survive being unable to have this liberty of expression and action and the transition process for us is not only important itself in adhering to the EU, but also of modernizing our life, our society and economy and in this regard two of our governments that were constituted of an alliance by 4 parties (and recently 3) named the Alliance for Integration and that is our ultimate goal and we will be working hard to achieve it.

Margaret Hayward:

Question #3

After the collapse of the former Soviet Union there was some talk of Romania and Moldova uniting. Could you tell us the reasons that people thought there should be unification and then my next question is, why it didn't happen in eventuality.

Ambassador Alexandru Cujba: (Republic of Moldova)

Response #3

Even though Moldova is a modern state is a modern nation with 19 years of independence. The old principality of Moldova stems from the 15th century and during our country's history it happened that the territory was either independent or part of Romania, the Russian Empire or under Ottoman Rule. So you can imagine we have the descendants of those people living in Moldova that have affiliated themselves with one or another party. Still we have many Moldovans that grew up and were educated in the former Soviet Union so they have attachments with the past. On the other hand, with Romania we share our history and our language -- there are different feelings in Moldova. You rightly mentioned that at the beginning of the nineties we had some exponents with the unification of Romania and no more that 10% of the politicians and population of Moldova supported that trend.

Natasha Despotovic: (GFDD Executive Director)

Thank you Mr. Ambassador for that answer and I think you have answered it mostly but we had another question that I would like to be asked as it was received by one of our audience on the internet.

Asuncion Sanz: (GFDD Director of Washington DC office)

Question #4

Yes, Fermin Gomonzolo from Argentina was in fact asking; "Taking into account recent history and the adoption of Romanian as the official language, is there any political movement supporting on unification with Romania at this time. If yes, would Moldovans vote in favor of such an initiative?"

Ambassador Alexandru Cujba: (Republic of Moldova)

Response #4

As I mentioned, we had parliamentary elections in 2009 and 2010 and we had one political party that openly declared unification with Romania as it's ultimate goal. That party accumulated less than 1% so the results speak for themselves and all the other parties represented in parliament do not make any mention in their political agenda regarding possible refusal of Moldova's independence ad sovereignty.

Yamile Eusebio: (GFDD – Director - office in New York)

Question #5

Thank you Mr. Ambassador. Talking about the MDG's and the second one about Universal Education and knowing that you have increased the percentage of preschool education from 44% in 2000 to 75% in 2009 -- do you think you are going to achieve this particular goal by 2015?

Ambassador Alexandru Cujba: (Republic of Moldova)

Response #5

I think yes, and I will explain why. In the former Soviet Union we had almost universal primary education and we inherited that system. Of course we transformed our education system also to EU standards and I would not argue with the statistical data you indicated and most probably somewhere on the internet you found that percentage. I know for sure it is more than 40% and pretty sure more than 70% and I am pretty sure we will achieve the figure that was indicated in the Millennium Declaration by 2015.

Emy Rodriguez:

Question #6

I would like to know what you would say are the greatest environmental challenge for Moldova?

Ambassador Alexandru Cujba: (Republic of Moldova)

Response #6

The use of land in Moldova we have 60% of land that could be used for fruits and vegetables and other agricultural products, but at the same time the proper use of that land is a challenge for us.

Emy Rodriguez:

Question #7

Expanding on what you said earlier about seeking new markets would you say organic farming would be a viable for Moldova and are you doing anything to tap into that market?

Ambassador Alexandru Cujba: (Republic of Moldova)

Response #7

Yes organic farming would be good, but of course we need modern technologies, on the other hand during this transition period we didn't have the resources to invest in pesticides and other substances that would preclude us from entering into this organic market. At the moment we have the capabilities of entering this market we just need the proper management of land, modern technologies and of course we need the marketing of our products in strong competition with other producers.

Natasha Despotovic: (GFDD Executive Director)

Question #8

We would like to give you a present on behalf of the foundation. It's a book on the DR. We didn't talk much about the DR, but we definitely hope that you will have time to see the book and maybe visit us. And here is some information on GFDD and what we do and we are extremely interested in coming in contact with organizations in your country that do similar work-- some non profits or foundations or institutions that promote socio-economic development in different areas, so we really hope to stay in touch with you and we thank you for your time.

Ambassador Alexandru Cujba: (Republic of Moldova)

Response #8

Natasha I thank you, Ambassador Lorenzo and all of your colleagues for inviting me to have the possibility to express the results that Moldova achieved during its transition period and also to let people around the world know about Moldova, because we are a small country and we do not have so many diplomatic missions -- and unfortunately don't have one in the DR! I sincerely hope that after reading this book I will have the possibility to compare the images from the book with the reality! So thanks again for inviting me and having this interesting and stimulating discussion.

Ambassador Francis Lorenzo (Permanent Representative of the Republic of Dominican Republic to the United Nations)

Mr. Ambassador; Don't worry, your next invitation will be to come to the DR!

Also, Ambassador I would like to congratulate your Prime Minister for the achievements that your country has had when we talk about the MDGs.

Thank you, Natasha, for this initiative. We will see you at the next Global Roundtable.