Support to Administrative Territorial Reform
Steering Committee Meeting No. 4
September 19, 2014

Minutes of the Meeting

Participants:

1. Mr. Bledar Çuçi, Minister of State on Local Issues (joining during the lat session)
2. Mr. Enea Hoti Advisor to the Minister of Local Issues (MoLI) and STAR Project Director
3. Ms. Yesim Oruc, UNDP Country Director
4. Ms. Lisa Fredriksson, Embassy of Sweden Head of Development Cooperation
5. Ms. Linda Gjermani, Embassy of Sweden, Programme Officer
6. Mr. Holger Tausch, Swiss Embassy/Swiss Cooperation Office, Director of Cooperation
7. Ms. Elda Bagaviki, Swiss Embassy/Swiss Cooperation Office, National Programme officer,
8. Mr. Vladimir Malkaj Programme Officer, Regional Development & Environment Cluster
9. Ms. Suzana Cullufi, Democracy and Governance Specialist, USAID
10. Mr. Mark Ellingstad, USAID General Development Officer
11. Mr. Andrea Senatori, Italian Cooperation
12. Ismail Ademi, Italian Cooperation, Programme Manager
13. Mr. Marco Leidehher, Council of Europe
14. Ms. Anila Shehu, STAR Project Coordinator

Agenda:

✓ Short briefing on TAR progress
✓ Reporting on STAR project phase I
✓ Discussing on STAR project II transition phase
✓ Questions/discussions

Meeting Minutes

1. Short briefing on Administrative Territorial Reform

At the begging of the meeting, Minister Cuci thanked all the donors that have contributed to the implementation of the first phase of the Territorial and Administrative Reform and welcomed Italian cooperation on the board. Then, he continued with a short briefing of the new developments in the framework of the Territorial and Administrative Reform during June – August 2014. He highlighted two culminating moments of the reform, awareness campaign and citizen participation and the approval of the reform in the parliament.
A few questions related with the post reform approval followed the presentation. Participants were interested to know about the plans of MLI and Technical Secretariat to address the referendum option or defense in the Constitutional Court (CC) of the case. As far as referendum is concerned, the minister responded that he didn’t see any opportunity for any referendum to get organized. Work for planning the implementation phase of the reform can start; constitutional court may provide comments but cannot turn the law back to the parliament. MLI needs some extra expertise in order to get prepared for defending of the case in the CC.

Another issue of interest for the participants was the electoral code, if there will be changes of the EC and when will it happen. The minister highlighted that there is a confirm statement of government to not propose any change of the EC without participation and approval of the opposition. Thus, no major changes are foreseen. There will be very small alterations related with the new map. SP has its own ideas about proposal changes of election system – he said – but no endeavor will be undertaken without contribution of the opposition.

2. Reporting on STAR project phase I

Vladimir Malkaj, programme officer in UNDP focused in his presentation on the main activities and major achievements of STAR during June – August 2014. (Please find in annex 1 the presentation in Power Pint). During this period, STAR has been active in supporting the MLI to ensure participation of citizens in the discussions about new territorial division and in documenting the entire process.

3. Discussing on STAR project II transition phase

Enea focused during his presentation on activities planned for the second transition phase, the identified approach and the stakeholders going to be involved. (PPP annex 2).

He presented to the participants some of the major challenges of this phase which have to do with assessment and management of assets, unification of potentially different existing business systems, preservation of data and administrative records, transfer of liabilities, contracts, agreements, coordination of central and local institutions, cooperation among merging local government units. Ministry of Finance, Ministry of Social Wealth fare and Youth, Ministry of Urban Planning and Tourism, Governmental Audit Office, Association of Communes, Local Government Units, and Prefects are some the main stakeholders identified to cooperate with during the transition phase.

As far as approach and methodology development is concerned, Enea highlighted that in order to design a proper and applicable methodology, TS will make use of the existing best experiences in the country (i.e. LGDP project, voluntary merging experiences), will assess the level of information already existing and collected, will develop the template, will pilot it first with one or two LGU before implementing it to the remaining LGUs.

In order to have a quality and efficient implementation of the second transition phase recognized as challenging and complex, TS requested another vehicle and logistical support to move to new offices which offer more space for staff and experts that will be engaged.

4. Questions/discussions/ recommendations

- The participants were interested to have a copy of the working plan the moment it is drafted; STAR will circulate to all the partners
- As Decentralization process is happening parallel to TAR, it is recommended to have a good coordination by taking advantage of the two processes in order to avoid any problem that may encounter
• Another issue for consideration was the impact of TAR to women and their representation in LGU and their councils. The participants were informed that UN women have undertaken an assessment of the impact TAR will have on women, their representation in LG by identifying ways providing recommendations on ways to improve the situation. STAR will have access to the study and make us of the provided recommendations.

• When discussing about STAR financial gab of about 1 million USD, excluding the Italian contribution, SIDA and Swiss Cooperation were pronounced and expressed their commitment to continue supporting STAR.