

## PAKISTANI TOURIST POTENTIAL FOR THE GROWTH OF THE MOLDAVIAN TOURISM INDUSTRY AND SEVERAL TYPES OF TOURISM FOR MOLDAVIANS TOURISTS IN PAKISTAN

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**Abstract:** *Tourism is an essential component for the socio-economic development of any country. Pakistan is the fifth most populous country in the world and its population is 241.50 million which is more than half of the European Union's population. The population of Moldova is 2.5 million. Pakistani tourists have zero shares in Moldova's tourism statistics. Tourism contributes to all the sustainable development goals of the United Nations. The infrastructure of Moldova supports international tourism activities.*

*Moldova and Pakistan must open their diplomatic missions in their respective capitals to boost bilateral tourism. Moldova is required to start the visa-free regime for Pakistani tourists up to ninety days with mandatory requirement of a paid return air ticket for Pakistani tourists. In addition, direct flights between Moldova and Pakistan are necessary to start. The Travel & Tourism Development Index (TTDI) of Pakistan is far below Moldova. There are many forms of tourism that exist in Moldova. For example, rural tourism, cultural tourism, gastronomic tourism, nature tourism, agritourism, river tourism, archaeological tourism, etc.*

*A digital portal in Romanian, English, Urdu languages, and other languages of the world is required to rent accommodations for tourism purposes in Moldova. Pakistanis understand English and Urdu language. Pakneftegaz is ready to voluntarily assist in English and Urdu translation to the Government of Moldova for the development of a tourism digital portal to attract Pakistani tourists to Moldova.*

*Safety and security are the keys to attracting international tourism. Moldova is a safe place for international tourists but safety measures need to adopt in Pakistan. Moldavians are very hospitable. Moldovan cuisine is not as spicy and oily as Pakistani cuisine. Borscht, a soup made from vegetables, meat, and beetroots is a common dish in Moldova.*

*Upper Trajan's Wall is an important part of archaeological tourism in Moldova. The length of the wall is 120 kilometers and, it stretches from the Dniester River to the Prut River. An archaeological site of the Memorial Column is located in the city of Vulcanesti, an autonomous region of Gagauzia, Republic of Moldova. This monument was designed by the architect Bouffeuau for the victory of the Russian Army over the Turkish army in the battle of Cahul in 1770 in the city of Vulcanesti. Stephen the Great Central Park is famous for the monument of Stephen the Great and very famous archaeological heritage for international tourism. The great hero of the Moldavian nation and Romanian nation is Stephen the Great. He was great fighter and wise ruler. The monument was designed by architect Alexandru Plămădeală. Low-cost and safe river tourism is another form of international tourist attraction in Moldova. Kayaking tours are offered on multiple water locations in Moldova.*

*Pakistan is a multi-ethnic, multi-cultural, and multi-linguistic country but the majority of the nation understands the Urdu language. The Pakistani tourism industry is male-dominated. Moldavian women tourists are advised to wear the Pakistani dresses in Pakistan. Mountaineering tourism, cultural tourism, miscellaneous festivals, and Pakistani cuisine can be the centre of attraction. Kabaddi and Polo are a kind of sport and a new sport for the Moldavian tourists. K2 is the second highest mountain and international tourism attraction in the world which is located in Gilgit-Baltistan part of Pakistan. Pakistan has a number of archaeological sites and forts.*

**Keywords:** *Digital tourism portal, Moldovan cuisine, archaeological tourism, monument of Stephen the Great, river tourism.*

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## **1. Introduction**

International tourism is the key driver of sustainable development. Tourism is a powerful tool to reduce economic and social disparities and conserve cultural and archaeological resources. Both Moldova and Pakistan are rich in tourism assets. Tourism provides 1 in 10 jobs worldwide. It is a major tool for social and economic transformations in many regions of the world.

In 2022, Moldova earned \$0.68 billion and Pakistan earned PKR 208.9 billion from visitor exports. Pakistani international tourist potential can significantly improve the earnings of Moldova from visitor exports. Spending within the country by international tourists for both leisure purposes and business purposes, including spending on multimodal transportation is termed as visitor exports, and it is a prime component in the direct contribution of tourism.

In 2023, percentage-wise visits of Moldavian international tourists or Moldavian outbound tourists to mention below countries are inked. Türkiye 47%, Bulgaria 18.9%, Egypt 10.6%, Romania 10.3%, and the rest of the world 13.2%. There is no share of Moldavian outbound tourists and excursionists in the Pakistani tourism sector.

The Republic of Moldova is a landlocked country and it has an area of 33,483 square kilometers. It has a small population of 2.5 million. It is bordered by Ukraine to the north, east, and south, and Romania to the west. Romanian is the national language of Moldova but Russian language, Ukrainian language, and Gagauz language. Moldova is an upper middle-income country.

Pakistan has a population of 241.50 million and is the fifth most populous country in the world. Pakistan is lower-middle income and its poverty rate is 40.1 percent as per the World Bank. Pakistan has a total area of 881,913 square kilometers. Pakistan shares land borders with China to the northeast, Iran to the southwest, Afghanistan to the west, and India to the east. Pakistan has an Arabian Sea which is in the south. Pakistan is a multi-ethnic and multi-linguistic country. More than seventy languages are spoken as first language in Pakistan. Most of Pakistan's languages were brought to the area of Pakistan is the result of steppe migrations between the first and second millennia BCE. These Pakistani languages descend from a common ancestor that was spoken in the Sintashta region (an archaeological site in Chelyabinsk Oblast) of the Russian Federation during the mid-bronze age. Educated people of Pakistan can speak in the English language.

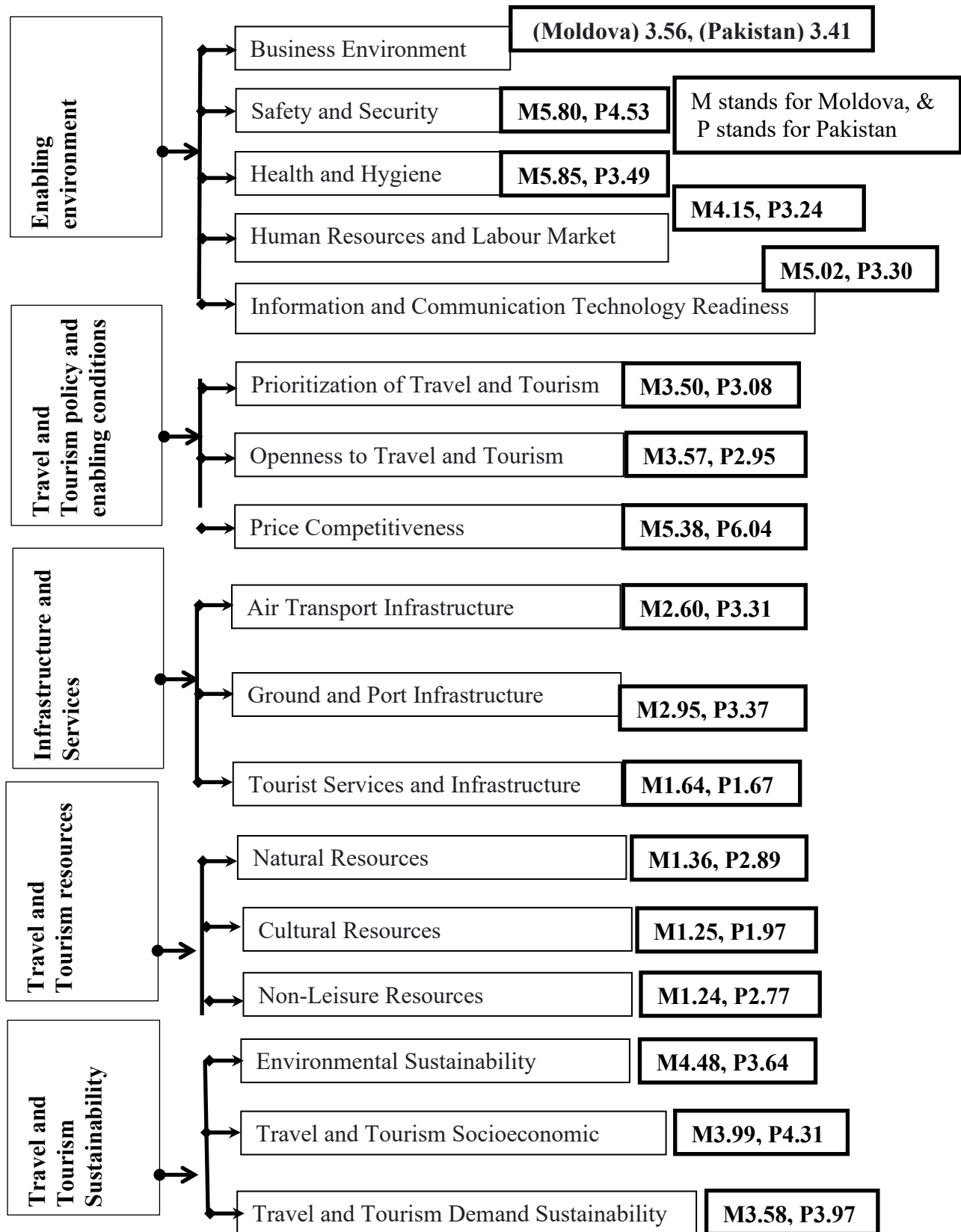
The share of Pakistani women employment in the tourism sector is 2.4 percent which is extremely low. Indecent behaviour and harassment are normally observed towards Pakistani women in the tourism industry and other areas of the economy. Pakistani male occupies all forms of tourism in Pakistan. Women empowerment in the tourism sector of Moldova is much higher than in Pakistan.

The research methodology involves both qualitative research and quantitative research. This includes observations, Interviews with foreign tourists in Pakistan, websites, email correspondences, YouTube videos, and ethnographic research and local people's behaviour towards tourists. In addition, relevant tourism sources include United Nations World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) and World Travel & Tourism Council (WTTC) publications, the literature review of case studies, books, government publications, and UN publications, etc.

## **2. Basic content**

### **2.1 Travel & Tourism Development Index of Moldova and Pakistan**

Framework of the Travel & Tourism (T&T) Development Index consists of five pillars. Pillar No.1: Enabling environment; Pillar No.2: Travel and Tourism policy and enabling conditions; Pillar No.3: Infrastructure and Services, Pillar No.4: Travel and Tourism resources; Pillar No.5: Travel and Tourism Sustainability



**Figure 1. Travel & Tourism Development Index Scores of Moldova and Pakistan in detail.**

*Source: Travel & Tourism Development Index 2024, Insight Report May 2024.  
 ([https://www3.weforum.org/docs/WEF\\_Travel\\_and\\_Tourism\\_Development\\_Index\\_2024.pdf](https://www3.weforum.org/docs/WEF_Travel_and_Tourism_Development_Index_2024.pdf))*

Rank of Travel & Tourism Development Index of Moldova is much better than Pakistan and it ranks 88 while Pakistan ranks 101. Travel and Tourism contribution to the economies of Moldova and Pakistan is 9.1% (USD 9.90 Trillion) in 2023.

Moldova has a bigger surface area than Belgium (total area is 30,688 km<sup>2</sup>). The rank on the Travel & Tourism Development Index of Belgium is 23 while Switzerland (total area is 41,285 km<sup>2</sup>) is 10. It means that Moldova can improve its Travel & Tourism Development Index by having a small surface area.



**Figure 2. From Google search engine**

Accommodation and food services in resorts in miscellaneous parts of Pakistan are not in the affordable range of the common Pakistani people. On January 7, 2022, 23 Pakistani domestic tourists died in their vehicles on the road of the high-altitude town of Murree because of the freezing temperature of snowfall and traffic jams. In addition, hotels tremendously increased the food and accommodation prices. Murree is hardly 54 kilometers from the federal capital of Pakistan. The traffic jam occurred because vehicles entering and leaving the city of Murree were beyond the road capacity, and there were no traffic counters and classifiers installed at the entrance and exit of the Murree.

In May 2011, one innocent Tajik citizen and four innocent Russian citizens including seven months pregnant Russian woman were shot dead near the Kharotabad area of Quetta city, Balochistan province, The Russian woman was born in Yakutsk, Republic of Sakha of the Russian Federation. In January 2024, Motahhreh Abbasi of Iran, Charlie West of the United Kingdom, and Alex Sidney of Italy were misbehaved and tortured in the Sadiqabad Saddar police area of Sadiqabad, Punjab province, Pakistan. All three persons were international cycling tourists.

The safety, security, and hygiene situation is much better in Moldova to attract international tourism. That’s why more tourist traffic is anticipated from Pakistan to Moldova. International motorcycle

tourism, international cycling tourism, and international walking tourism are the forms of tourism that can attract international tourists.

International tourism generates imports. The Economic leakages exist in the travel and tourism industry. If the country is less developed, the leakages will be more. A certain amount of leakage is inevitable in international tourism. Two types of leakages are identified in tourism. When international tourists demand certain products, equipment and food that the host country cannot supply, it is called import leakage. The Pakistani tourists in Moldova will demand certain products for example rice, pink Himalayan salt, dates. Mangoes, Pakistani pickles, miscellaneous herbs and spices, leather products and Pharmaceutical industry related products etc. which are not available in the local economy of Moldova. In this case, Moldavian suppliers will look to Pakistan or somewhere else to import these goods. This all is related to import leakage in tourism and Pakistan can benefit from it.

Export leakages are related to multinational corporations, large foreign businesses, International hotel chains, etc in Moldova or Pakistan.

## **2.2 Linkages of United Nation’s Sustainable Development Goals with International Tourism:**

Moldova and Pakistan can collaborate on the inked below United

Nation’s sustainable development goals to promote international tourism in their respective countries.

### **Sustainable Development Goal No.1- End poverty in all its forms everywhere**

International tourism will generate decent job opportunities, increase income levels, reduce the risks of poverty, and improve the situation of economic opportunities in miscellaneous regions of Moldova. Low skills are needed. Any local Moldavian woman or man who has one or two-bedroom spaces in his/ her house and knows cooking skills can easily attract international tourists from Pakistan.

### **Sustainable Development Goal No.2- End hunger, achieve food security and nutrition, promote sustainable agriculture**

International tourism enhances the demand for fruit, vegetables, fish, dairy industry, livestock industry, poultry industry, mushrooms etc. Local Moldavian farmers can take the economic benefits by supplying agricultural products to hotels, restaurants, and international tourists. It will promote the sustainable agricultural activities in Moldova. International tourists from Pakistan and other countries will enjoy staying in the Moldavian farmhouses. It will promote the Agritourism in Moldova.

### **Sustainable Development Goal No.3- Ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages**

Moldova has an Under-five child mortality rate of 14.2 deaths per 1,000 people. This is higher than Monaco (1.91 deaths per 1,000 births), Luxembourg, Finland, Japan, Norway, Singapore, Sweden and Iceland. The government of Moldova can reduce the child mortality rate and improve healthcare facilities via revenue generated from international tourism.

### **Sustainable Development Goal No. 4- Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning for all**

International tourism can promote inclusiveness. It provides direct and indirect decent jobs for women, old people, young people, disabled people, and marginalized groups.

**Sustainable Development Goal No. 5- Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls**

International tourism can empower Moldavian women and young girls in the hotel industry, restaurants, and other areas of tourism. In Pakistan, the concept of gender equality does not exist in tourism industry. Women's share in the Pakistani tourism sector is very low, and the Pakistani tourism industry is male-dominated.

**Sustainable Development Goal No. 6 - Ensure availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all**

Moldova is rich in water resources. These include lakes, rivers, and artificial ponds. There are more than five thousand small dams in Moldova for drinking water and agricultural purposes. Dubăsari Dam and Stânca-Costești Dam are two big water reservoirs. Rural communities of Moldova get their drinking water from underground deep wells. The sanitation situation in Moldova is much better than in Pakistan.

**Sustainable Development Goal No. 7 - Ensure access to affordable, reliable, sustainable, and modern energy for all**

International tourism cannot grow without a cheap and uninterrupted supply of electricity. Pakistan is facing the problem of costly power generation and interrupted supply of electricity to its domestic and industrial consumers including the tourism sector. The electricity cost in Moldova is much better than in Pakistan.

**Sustainable Development Goal No. 8 - Promote sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, employment and decent work for all**

Approximately 1.4 million Moldavian workforce are working in foreign countries. Remittances from Moldovan emigrants are decreasing because their families are reuniting in the host countries. International tourism will promote the number of tourism industry-related services and generate decent work for Moldavian people. These services include tourist transportation, hospitality service of rural communities, promotion of Moldavian culture, cuisine, insurance, banks, etc. Security services for tourists in some areas of Pakistan.

**Sustainable Development Goal No. 9 -Build resilient infrastructure, promote inclusive and sustainable industrialization and foster innovation**

Moldova has better infrastructure and is cheap to attract international tourists from Pakistan. The costs of hotel stay and food expenses are low in Moldova as compared to Pakistan. The quality of food and hygienic conditions of restaurants are highly questionable in Pakistan. But the food and beverage quality and hygienic conditions of Moldavian restaurants and any Moldavian house kitchen are very good.

**Sustainable Development Goal No. 10 -Reduce inequality within and among countries**

Government of Moldova can engage the urban and rural communities for the development of international tourism. It will reduce the inequality in Moldavian society and will provide the opportunity for the local people to prosper in their local communities.

**Sustainable Development Goal No.11-Make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable**

International tourism will contribute to developing the urban and rural communities in tourist places of Moldova and Pakistan. Both countries can protect the natural heritage and cultural heritage under SDG No.11 and generate a large amount of revenue.

**Sustainable Development Goal No.12 - Ensure sustainable consumption and production patterns**

There are fundamental changes needed to produce and consume goods and services in the Pakistani tourism sector. Polypropylene bags, polyethylene bags, and single-use items are the common issue in Pakistani tourist places. Responsible tourism practices need to be adopted to save biodiversity, water, and forests.

**Sustainable Development Goal No.13 - Take urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts**

The tourism sector contributes to greenhouse gas emissions. The introduction of hydrogen fuel cell vehicles and electric vehicles is the solution to combat climate change in Moldova and Pakistan.

**Sustainable Development Goal No.14 - Conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas and marine resources for sustainable development**

There is a very long coastline of the Arabian Sea in Balochistan province and Sindh province of Pakistan. Coastal tourism and marine tourism have the potential to uplift the blue economy of Pakistan. The Arabian Sea has warm sea water in almost all the year. Pakistan can easily attract millions of international tourists including Moldavian tourists. This kind of tourism can economically benefit the local Baloch people and Sindhi people and will help the government of Pakistan in poverty eradication.

Moldova is a landlocked country but it has abundant water resources including small dams, lakes, rivers, springs, etc. Safe kayaking tours in miscellaneous rivers and staying with local Moldavian families are the point of attraction for Pakistani international tourists.

**Sustainable Development Goal No.15 - Protect, restore and promote sustainable use of terrestrial ecosystems and halt biodiversity loss**

Moldova is rich in fauna and flora, natural heritage, and biodiversity. Unnecessary road construction practices and the spread of horizontal residential houses are destroying the terrestrial ecosystems in densely populated Pakistan. It also causes biodiversity losses in Pakistan.

**Sustainable Development Goal No.16 - Promote peaceful and inclusive societies, provide access to justice for all and build inclusive institutions**

Pakistan ranks 129th out of 140 countries while Moldova ranks 68th out of 140 countries as per the World Justice Rule of Law Index. Improvement of rule of law situation attracts international tourism to the country.

**SDG 17 – Strengthen the means of implementation and revitalize the global partnership for sustainable development**

The tourism sector can engage the local, national, and international stakeholders to jointly work to achieve the United Nation’s sustainable development goals. Both the government of Moldova and the government of Pakistan need to collaborate in the tourism sector to achieve sustainable development goals.

### **2.3 Mountain Tourism**

Pakistan is famous for mountain tourism. Pakistan has the world's second high mountain peak known as K2. It lies in the Gilgit–Baltistan area of Pakistan. The height of K2 is 8611 meters. The world's ninth high mountain peak is known as Nanga Parbat, and is located in the Gilgit–Baltistan area of Pakistan. Height of Nanga Parbat is 8126 meters. There are several mountain peaks 3000 meters to 8000+ meters in Pakistan. Mountain tourism is a costly and dangerous form of tourism. Every year many international tourists visit Pakistan for mountain tourism. This form of tourism provides the opportunity to international tourists to visit local communities and experience flora and fauna.

Balanesti Hill is the highest point in Moldova. Its altitude is 430 meters. Hiking is not dangerous on Balanesti Hill. International tourists from Pakistan and other countries have the opportunity to enjoy the landscape, biodiversity, and local food. There are several paragliding sites in Moldova and Pakistan is available for international tourists.

### **2.4 Gastronomy tourism**

This kind of tourism is also known as culinary tourism or food tourism. The linkage between local and national development and food tourism is obvious. Gastronomy tourism is based on the local culture. Both Moldova and Pakistan have a variety of dishes. Mămăligă is the national dish of Moldova. Nihari is the national dish of Pakistan. Moldavian soups and minced meat-based stuffed cabbage rolls (known in Moldova as sarmale, and in Azerbaijan as dolma) are very delicious. Bread-baking practices in Moldova and Pakistan are different. The people of Punjab province and Sindh province use red chilies and a lot of cooking oil in their dishes. Sohan halwa is a sweet dish and specialty of the people of Dera Ismail Khan. Sobot or painda (in the Pashto language) is also a famous dish in Dera Ismail Khan and other parts of the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province in Pakistan. Food adulteration is a common issue in Pakistan. It is also a threat to the health security of the people of Pakistan and the international tourists who are visiting Pakistan. Pakneftgaz provides advice to international tourists for a visit which kinds of restaurants, hotels, or shops in miscellaneous areas of Pakistan.

Moldavian cuisine is safe and healthy for international food tourists. The persons of 60 years age group and older consist of 23.8% population of Moldova in 2023. Older Moldavian women are more than 60% share in the ageing population. There is a projection that 33% of Moldavians will be over 60 years age in 2040. As compared to other European nations older persons are poorer in Moldova. These older Moldavians can cook the local dishes and provide bed space or camping tents for international tourists from Pakistan and other countries.

### **2.5 Religious tourism**

Religious tourism is also a big contribution to the country's economy. Religious tourism is also called sacred tourism, spiritual tourism, or faith tourism. Every year, the government of Pakistan contributes to the economies of Saudi Arabia, Iran, Iraq, and India through religious tourism. Similarly, many Muslims, Hindus, and Sikhs visit Pakistan as religious tourists and contribute to the economy of Pakistan. Pakistan is a Muslim country but it has a significant number of Christian minorities. There are old historical churches in many cities of Pakistan. For example, the historical Saint Thomas Church of Dera Ismail Khan City, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province, Pakistan. Major-General Sir Henry



Marion Durand is buried in the area of Saint Thomas Church. He drew a Durand line between British India (now Pakistan) and Afghanistan in 1893. The Durand line is a historically controversial borderline. Moldova is a Christian country and it has several monasteries and churches. Moldavian monasteries and churches are the source of attraction for Pakistani Christian minorities. There are eight Romanian Orthodox Churches that are listed by UNESCO as World Heritage sites. These include Arbore Church, Humor Monastery, Moldovița Monastery, Church of the Elevation of the Holy Cross, Probota Monastery, Saint John the New Monastery, Voroneț Monastery and Sucevița Monastery.

## **2.6 Archaeological tourism**

Pakistan is rich in archaeological tourism. There are several archeological sites for example, the Buddhist Civilization in Taxila, Badshahi Mosque, Mohenjo Daro, Rohtas Fort, Mazar-e-Quaid (National Mausoleum), etc. The national monument of Minar-e-Pakistan, it was designed by the Russian-born civil engineer and architect Nasreddin Murat Khan. Similarly, Moldova is also rich in archaeological tourism sites. These include Soroca Fort (it is built by Stephen the Great), Mimi Castle, Orhei Fort, Tighina Fortress etc.

### **Necessary steps to attract Pakistani tourists to Moldova:**

- (i)** The government of Moldova needs to open an embassy in Islamabad and similarly the government of Pakistan needs to open a diplomatic mission in Chișinău.
- (ii)** The government of Moldova needs to start a visa-free regime for Pakistani tourists up to ninety days, and the same philosophy needs to follow the government of Pakistan.
- (iii)** Moldavian Airlines needs to start direct flights between Islamabad (the capital of Pakistan) to Chișinău (the Capital of Moldova) and vice versa. Airlines fall in the definition of the tourism value chain as per the United Nations World Tourism Organization (UNWTO). Why Moldavian Airline is necessary because it will stop the export leakage from air travel.

This step will not only boost tourism but also provide access to Moldavian agricultural products, Moldavian traditional woven carpets, and other products to Pakistani markets. Similarly, Pakistan can export its products.

- (iv)** 862,625 Pakistani citizens emigrated in the year 2023 and 832,339 Pakistani citizens emigrated to other countries of the world. Over 6,000 Pakistanis made it illegal to reach European shores in the year 2023.

Emigration from Pakistan continues because of poverty, unemployment, absence of rule of law, economic inequality, etc. Before the arrival of Pakistani tourists at Chișinău airport, the mandatory requirement of a paid return air ticket to Pakistan should be the essential requirement for every individual tourist from Pakistan. This condition will help the government of Moldova in terms of economics and combat the problem of illegal emigration.

- (v)** The Government of Moldova needs to develop a tourism digital portal to rent accommodations in hotels, local houses, tented camps, farmhouses, etc. Accommodation is a tourism value chain as per the definition of the United Nations World Tourism Organization (UNWTO). This digital portal must be in English, Urdu, Romanian, and other languages of the world are required. This digital portal will make it convenient for international tourists from Pakistan or other countries to seek accommodation

in Moldavian urban and rural areas. In addition, the local Moldavian people who want to paste their digital advertisements for bed space, a room, a farmhouse, or camping can economically benefit from this digital portal. In this way, the government of Moldova can engage unemployed young or old people in rural and urban areas, and eradicate poverty in terms of tourism digital portal.

### 3. Conclusion

(i) Pakistan needs to develop the necessary tourism infrastructure in Balochistan province and Sindh province to attract international tourists for Coastal tourism and marine tourism. In addition, improves its global ranking for the rule of law and needs to promote gender equality in the tourism sector.

(ii) A Pakistan-based company named Pakneftegaz will prepare the Journey Management Plan, arrange transport, arrange security, arrange accommodation facilities, and provide tour guides for Moldavian tourists and other international tourists who are interested in visiting the miscellaneous areas of Pakistan. In addition, the company “Pakneftegaz” will closely work with the Moldavian travel agencies, tour operators, tour guides, the Academy of Economic Studies of Moldova, and Moldavian government authorities to attract international tourism from Pakistan to Moldova and vice versa.

(iii) The government of Pakistan needs to take serious action against food adulteration practices in Pakistan. This step will encourage international gastronomy tourism in Pakistan.

(iv) The government of Moldova can engage its 23.8% population of old age group in food tourism or gastronomy tourism.

(v) The Government of Moldova can easily fall in the first top ten ranking countries of the world in the Travel & Tourism Development Index (TTDI) if make improvements in the international tourism sector and opens new areas of tourism. In this context, Pakneftegaz is ready to work with the government of Moldova. The population of Pakistan is growing and its population is more than half the population of the European Union. The government of Moldova needs to harness this international tourism potential and attract Pakistani tourists.

(vi) International tourism from Pakistan and other countries is the solution to solve issue of emigration of Moldavian nationals from their home country. It will positively impact the Moldovian demographics and discourage the phenomenon of population shrinking, and local young Moldavians will not go abroad to seek employment opportunities.

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