Negotiations of the EU-Moldova Association Agreement. Recommendations to the Council, the Commission and the EEAS

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The Committee on Foreign Affairs adopted the own-initiative report drafted by Graham WATSON (ADLE, UK) containing the European Parliament's recommendations to the Council, the Commission and the EEAS on the negotiations between the EU and the Republic of Moldova on the Association Agreement.

Firstly, Members recall that the ENP the Eastern Partnership has created a meaningful political framework for deepening relations, accelerating political association and furthering economic integration between the EU and Moldova.

They underline that the negotiations with Moldova on the Association Agreement are proceeding at a steady pace and have achieved good progress to date, as have those on the Visa Dialogue. However, the negotiations on the Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Area (DCFTA) have not yet begun.

The report addresses, in the context of the ongoing negotiations on the Association Agreement, the following recommendations to the Council, the Commission and the European External Action Service (EEAS):

Fundamental values and structural reforms: Members consider that any negotiations between the parties should go hand in hand with the implementation of structural reforms in the country, as well as the principles of "more for more" and differentiation. These negotiations should also be continued at a steady pace and enable dialogue to be strengthened with all political parties in Moldova.

Solution to the Transnistrian conflict: Members recommend redoubling efforts to find a sustainable solution to the Transnistrian conflict and, to that end, to envisage a more robust and direct involvement in the political settlement of the Transnistrian conflict in accordance with the principle of the territorial integrity of Moldova. To help provide a solution to the conflict, Members consider that the EU should ensure that the proactive role of the EU in 5+2 talks is adequately resourced. They urge Russia to adopt more constructive and result-oriented action with a view to taking the negotiations forward and creating the conditions for a lasting and comprehensive settlement.

Visa issues: Members consider it necessary to take action to support Moldova in meeting the benchmarks of visa liberalisation, which should preferably be before the conclusion of the Agreement. They call for the Moldovans to be informed of the Association Agreement and the Action Plan on Visa Liberalisation in order to build support for the reform agenda.

Free Trade Area: Members call for the opening of negotiations on a Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Area (DCFTA) to begin by the end of 2011. An ambitious and fair negotiating agenda for the DCFTA, focusing on removing deterrents to bilateral trade and investment, namely legal and regulatory differences in technical, sanitary and phyto-sanitary standards, and on the remaining tasks regarding Moldova’s financial system and competition law.

Fight against corruption: Members call on the Moldovan authorities to maintain strong pressure, coupled with support, to consolidate reforms and achieve tangible progress in the fight against corruption,

reform of judicial, prosecution and police services to the benefit of the people. They emphasise in the Agreement the importance of good governance.

Protection of Human Rights and the Media: Members stress the need to include standard conditionality clauses on protection and promotion of human rights reflecting the highest international and European standards. They encourage the Moldovan authorities to adopt comprehensive and effective antidiscrimination legislation both in line and in spirit with the EU legislation and the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the EU. The Commission should help in developing the new media sector and provide technical support for the development of broadband internet in Moldova.

Trade and Intellectual Property: Members encourage the Moldovan authorities to demonstrate greater commitment to the transparent management of public finances and the improvement of public procurement legislation. They emphasise the great importance of implementing and enforcing intellectual property legislation, given the current high level of piracy and counterfeiting.

Environment: Members call on Moldova to reflect in the Association Agreement the highest environmental standards, particularly around the Danube region. They call for the modernisation of major industrial installations, among others those located on the right bank of the river Dniester. It is also necessary to involve the country in the EU Strategy for the Black Sea.

Energy: Members await further reforms in the energy sector, aimed at strengthening the energy security of Moldova, particularly through the promotion of energy conservation and energy efficiency and of renewable energy sources. They fully support the Moldovan authorities in their efforts to connect the Moldovan energy grid to the interconnected electricity network of continental Europe.

Employment and social affairs: Members encourage the Moldovan authorities to address the needs of 34.5% of the population living in absolute or extreme poverty. To that end, the EU assistance to Moldova should better reflect this reality and its programmes should be refocused accordingly. Moldova should make sure that economic recovery is reflected in job creation and that it continues convergence towards EU standards in the area of employment, including on non-discrimination and health and safety in the workplace.

Other areas: Members also call for: (i) the reopening of the railway line between Chisinau and Tiraspol to ensure the free movement of goods across the country; (ii) the demarcation of the whole of the Moldovan-Ukrainian border and examine an extension of the European Border Assistance Mission Moldova; (iii) concrete measures to discourage contraband within the State; (iv) the liberalisation of air traffic services.

European aid and democratic scrutiny of the European Parliament: Members call on the EU to provide sufficient financial and technical support to Moldova to ensure that this country can meet its commitments under the Association Agreement. Lastly, they ask for clear benchmarks for implementation of the Association Agreement to be given and for monitoring mechanisms, including the provision of regular reports to Parliament to be provided. They invite the EU High Level Advisory Group to the Republic of Moldova to report to the European Parliament on its activities on a regular basis.

In this context, they encourage the EU negotiating team to continue its good cooperation with the European Parliament, providing continuous feedback on progress in accordance with Article 218(10) TFEU, which states that Parliament shall be immediately and fully informed at all stages of the procedure.