Conclusion of an EU/Moldova association agreement

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The Committee on Foreign Affairs adopted, in accordance with Rule 99 of the Rules of Procedure of the European Parliament, the report by Petras AUŠTREVIIUS (ADLE, LT) containing a motion for a non-legislative resolution on the draft Council decision on the conclusion, on behalf of the European Union, of the Association Agreement between the European Union and the European Atomic Energy Community and their Member States, of the one part, and Moldova, of the other part.

Members recalled that the conclusion of the Association Agreement is not an end in itself, but is part of a broader process of enhancing the European perspective of Moldova. This is why they reaffirm that **the country may apply to become a member of the European Union** provided it adheres to the principles of democracy, respects fundamental freedoms and minority rights, and ensures the rule of law.

Objectives of the Agreement: Members recalled that the Agreement is for the benefit of the whole population. They stressed, therefore, the need to address in a timely and proper manner the social consequences of the associated reforms. They also stressed that both Moldova and the EU should be involved in the implementation of the Association Agenda, and that the priorities set out therein should receive **appropriate technical and financial support** so that the benefits of association are visible to Moldovan citizens as soon as possible whilst ensuring the monitoring of the absorption capacity and the use of EU funds.

Electoral process: Members recalled the importance of strengthening the stability, independence and effectiveness of the institutions responsible for guaranteeing democracy, the rule of law and good governance, and of consolidating the system of protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms in Moldova. In parallel, they called on the Moldovan authorities to ensure that the upcoming electoral process takes place according to the highest European and international standards and to adopt the necessary measures in order to **facilitate the participation of Moldovans living abroad**. They also noted the need to amend Article 78 of the Moldovan Constitution, on the election of the President, to avoid a resurgence of institutional deadlock which would be detrimental to the pace of reforms.

Reforms: Members noted the progress made by the Republic of Moldova's authorities in implementing the European reform agenda, but called for further improvements as regards:

- the need to intensify the fight against corruption at all levels;
- the need to enhance transparency and accountability in the management of public finances;
- the need to tackle impunity and effectively prosecute perpetrators of ill-treatment and torture;
- the need to ensure equality and protection for all minorities, in particular for ethnic, religious and LGBT minorities;
- the importance for the government to conduct a dialogue with representatives of all ethnic minorities and provide technical and financial support for infrastructure improvements in the autonomous territorial unit of Gagauzia and the Taraklia district;
- the need to strengthen media freedom and plurality.

Members fully supported the visa-free regime for Moldovan citizens and called on the Moldovan authorities to continue to disseminate information regarding rights and duties in relation to visa liberalisation.

They took note of the improvement in the capacities of the customs and border guard services and the continued demarcation of the border with Ukraine (including in the context of the work of the EU Border Assistance Mission (EUBAM)).

Political and economic enhancement of Moldova: Members highlighted the need to continue the work of professionalising and depoliticising central and local public administration, as this too will contribute greatly to the full implementation of the Association Agreement. They called on Moldova to carry out the decentralisation strategy in an inclusive manner. Members also pointed out the importance of effective local municipal authorities and adequate infrastructure in developing rural areas which is a pre-condition for reducing the rate of rural depopulation. They expect that the implementation of the Association Agreement/DCFTA will contribute to sustainable development and the smooth integration of the Moldovan economy into the world markets, stimulating its process of modernisation and creating better working conditions. In this regard, they urged the Commission to provide assistance and to advise Moldova on how to effectively deal with adaptation challenges in the short term, inter alia through cooperation with trade unions and the local business community.

Members reiterated the need for a transparent business and investment environment, appropriate regulatory reform and the continuation of the privatisation process, in order to boost the competitiveness of the economy of Moldova.

Parliamentary scrutiny: Members believe that parliamentary scrutiny is a fundamental condition for democratic support for EU policies. They called, therefore, on the Commission to facilitate in a timely manner the **regular and detailed monitoring of the implementation of the DCFTA by Parliament**. They noted that the DCFTA has been provisionally applied since 1 September 2014.

Pressure from Russia: Members strongly deplored the continued use of trade by Russia as a means to destabilise the region by introducing several import bans on products from Moldova, in violation of Russia's WTO commitments. They called on the Russian Federation to respect fully the territorial integrity of Moldova and its European choice. They fully supported the Commission's initiatives aimed at countering the effects of the Russian embargo on Moldovan products, including by providing financial support and extending and deepening the autonomous trade preferences afforded to Moldova.

Members are **concerned over Russia's actions aimed at undermining the association process of the EU's Eastern neighbours**. They reiterated their conviction that the association process of the EU's Eastern partners is **not a threat to Russia's political and economic interests**, and regretted that Russian leadership regards it as such.

Transnistria: Members called on Chisinau and Tiraspol to continue to engage constructively in order to find an effective solution for the settlement of the **Transnistria issue** and to take concrete steps to improve the livelihoods of the population. They expressed disappointment that so far the '5+2' framework has failed to offer a solution and demands a greater role for the EU, in particular by upgrading its status to that of a negotiating partner.

According to Members, it is essential to ensure that **Transnistria**, as an integral part of Moldova, **is covered by the reach and effects of the Association Agreement**. Overall, they stressed the importance, in this respect, of enhancing people-to-people contacts at all levels in order to create the conditions for a sustained dialogue and further promote confidence-building with a view to stepping up the peace process and achieving reconciliation between the parties.

Energy issue: lastly, Members took note of the recent revision of the energy strategy and called on the Government of Moldova to review and strengthen the 2013-2015 national action plan for energy efficiency, develop a credible and effective plan on renewable energy with a view to diversifying energy sources and align climate-change policies and targets with those of the EU. They welcomed the opening

of the IaMi-Ungheni gas interconnector and called on the Commission to intensify efforts in the construction of the Ungheni-Chisinau pipeline by strengthening financial support in order to finalise the project as soon as possible.