

Notes for Remarks by

Mr. Igor Corman, President of the Parliament, Republic of Moldova

Conference of Chairs of Foreign Policy Committees from EU, MS, and Community of Democracies

Vilnius, Lithuania, November 28, 2013

Your Excellences,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Good morning.

I would like first to thank the organizers, particularly Mr. Zingeris, for the invitation to participate at this important Conference in the context of the Vilnius Eastern Partnership Summit.

I would also like to extend my thanks for the remarks made by Mr. Linkevicius.

In 2009, the Eastern Partnership was launched to promote shared concepts of freedom, security, and trade between EU and neighbouring countries. Moldova accepted this challenge knowing full well that partnership with the EU is an evolving process. We are now prepared to deepen our relationship with the EU and our final goal is the full membership in the European Union.

Our presence here today is a clear sign of the progress Moldova has made to date. This has not been an easy journey for Moldova. After the political change in 2009, the pro-European government coalition faced many challenges, such as political instability, a lack of political experience, and how best to govern in a coalition. We were also challenged by the absence of a constructive dialogue with the opposition. Added to this were ongoing economic and social problems in a geopolitically complex region. Many of these challenges remain today.

Nonetheless, we have stayed true to our European agenda. Indeed, our European ideals have helped us to overcome our political differences, and retain our commitment and determination to continue Moldova's much-needed European reforms.

This commitment – and the over-riding support of the Moldovan people – has made it possible for us to respond quickly and effectively to the European Union requirements for the Association Agreement and its Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Agreement (DCFTA).

We can proudly share that Moldova has implemented all the requirements under the Action Plan for visa liberalisation presented by the EU. We were pleased to hear confirmation by European Commission President José Manuel Barroso that Moldova has met all the benchmarks and to learn yesterday that the European Commission proposed the legislative initiative to lift visas for Moldovan citizens.

As we initialize the text of the Association Agreement, we will more clearly identify other benchmarks that lie ahead in Moldova's journey towards a closer economic and political partnership with the European Union.

We will move swiftly to meet these new benchmarks. Immediately after the initialling, Moldova will begin organizing to implement and enforce major elements of the agreement. In particular, we will be addressing the potential impacts of the DCFTA, and helping Moldovan companies to enhance their competitiveness in anticipation of becoming an equal participant in the EU market.

European integration is a slow and complex process. One that will no doubt continue to give us growing pains as we begin our full adjustment to the new reality of economic integration and political association with the European Union.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

We know that much more effort by Parliament and by governmental and private sector institutions will be needed before full economic integration and political association and, ultimately accession with the European Union can take place. In other words, we recognize that European integration is an on-going process and not simply a product.

European Integration is an essential and irreversible process that Moldova is fully committed to making, and one that is well underway. Moldova already has a strong relationship with the European Union, evidenced by the fact that more than half of our foreign trade is with the European Union, and almost all of the capital investment in Moldova has its origins in the west.

The signing of the Association Agreement will demonstrate that Moldova is determined to secure its future and take its natural place among the nations of the European Union. It will also demonstrate that, like the European Union, Moldova is committed to the rule of law, to respecting human rights, and to good governance.

Importantly, the Association Agreement will contribute to another important commitment of ours – our fight against corruption, which is taking place through the modernization of our public services and public administration and the promotion of e-governance.

We have already begun introducing complex reforms in the justice sector and the prosecutor's office as part of measures aimed at fighting corruption. In addition, we have established the National Anticorruption Centre and the National Commission for Integrity, which will ensure the integrity of high-ranking government officials, judges, and prosecutors.

These improvements and others will also bring the government closer to its citizens and stimulate further open and accountable democratic governance and public participation. In this sense, European integration is very much a tool for domestic development.

Given the progress Moldova has made and the continued commitment from the government, its people, and the private sector, I look to European Union representatives to sign the Association Agreement as soon as possible so the Parliament of Moldova can do its part and have the agreement ratified.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

We look to the European Parliament and Council of the European Union for their continued support in coming to a swift and positive decision regarding liberalising visa requirements for Moldovans.

Some European Union member states may be reluctant to see visa liberalisation take place due to general concerns of migration and security. Moldova's response to this concern is the comprehensive implementation of conditions required in the Action Plan for visa liberalisation proposed by the EU. Recent reports made for the EU and other organizations concerning the potential impact on migration conclude that, in case of Moldova, the risks are minimal. Moreover, Moldova's situation is unique, due to the already high number of nationals established legally in a number of EU member states, and to the high number of Moldovans who already possess dual citizenship with EU.

Visa liberalisation will be an important contributor to the political and economic modernization reforms necessary for a secure and prosperous future. Liberalising visa requirements will make it easier for Moldovans to circulate within the EU, thereby increasing the potential to do business with our European counterparts. It will also create more opportunities to share our common values and our common vision.

Visa liberalisation has a strong motivation on Moldovan citizens whose active and vocal support is crucial to continuing the reforms we have begun. We know the impact such support has had on stimulating pro-European sentiment in states that are now EU members. The benefits of visa liberalisation and the DCFTA could also be applicable to the citizens in our transnistrian region. Thus, we can anticipate that it will contribute to a positive settlement of the transnistrian issue as well.

Moldova has demonstrated its commitment to meeting the requirements of the Action Plan for visa liberalisation. Now there is a need for an equally strong political will in the EU capitals and countries.

In anticipation of the European Parliament elections, we hope the European Parliament will adopt a decision before the end of March. A positive decision on liberalising short-term stays in Europe for Moldovans would be an encouraging indication to our citizens of the near and tangible benefits of the European integration process.

To the Committee Chairs I say that we also count very much on positive support and active encouragement from your states.

Dear Colleagues,

It is important to note that while the economic and political future of Moldova lies with European integration, we must not view this as a geopolitical choice.

Nonetheless, we must and will continue a close cooperation with our neighbours to the east. Increasing our association with the European Union while also continuing our cooperation with our traditional partners in the east is not mutually exclusive. Indeed, they must be complementary. For ultimately, an economically stronger and stable Moldova will be better able to understand, respond, and respect the interests of our partners.

In our increasingly complex world, competition among different countries and regional projects is not only healthy but essential. An important characteristic of competition is that each country should and must have the right to decide its own priorities and determine its own future. Essential to this choice is the need for frank and open communications that help avoid confrontation.

On this note, I encourage European parliamentarians to extend their cooperative approach to other countries in the region through Euronest or similar inter-parliamentary mechanisms. In this regard, I would like to offer our capital of Chisinau as the site for next year's Community of Democracies meeting.

Dear friends,

The majority of the Moldovan people supports the pro-European orientation of the government coalition. This was clearly demonstrated on November 3rd this year when over 100 thousand citizens assembled in Chisinau to voice their belief that the future of their country lies with European integration. Their voice reaffirms the commitment made by the Parliament of Moldova in its November 14 Declaration to continue internal reforms and efforts to join the European Union.

In voicing their overwhelming support for the European Union, Moldovans have also expressed the need to address impacts of integration on job creation and economic growth. The European Union can help with this by actively supporting and guiding our integration as it has with other candidate countries and new member states. In doing so, it will be essential to recognize the special cultural and national heritage of Moldova, and incorporate these considerations into future discussions regarding our European perspective.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Moldova's choice is clear. Moldova's choice is made.

We count on your support. Once again, thank you for the opportunity to share my thoughts with you.