

Joint press release following the first Association Council meeting between the European Union and the Republic of Moldova

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The European Union and the Republic of Moldova (hereinafter "Moldova") held today the first meeting of the Association Council under the new Association Agreement. The EU and Moldova reconfirmed the common will to implement their commitments regarding Moldova's political association and economic integration with the EU. Both sides underlined their determination to work towards a successful Eastern Partnership Summit in Riga in May.

The Association Council welcomed the provisional application of the EU-Moldova Association Agreement with its Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Area as of 1 September and highlighted the importance of timely ratification of this Agreement by all EU Member States in accordance with their national procedures. The Association Agreement will be the basis on which Moldova proceeds with its reform agenda and economic modernization in the years to come. The Association Council launched the institutional framework of enhanced cooperation by adopting rules of procedure.

Both parties reconfirmed their common objective to build a democratic, stable and prosperous Moldova. The Association Council acknowledged the importance of giving a new impetus to much needed political and economic reforms in Moldova. In particular, the EU underlined the necessity to step up efforts on preventing and fighting corruption and on reforming the justice sector, and to urgently address weaknesses in the financial sector. Improving the business and investment climate and ensuring sustainability of ongoing economic reforms will bring benefits for the society at large. The EU reaffirmed its readiness to continue supporting Moldova towards these goals. Moreover, the Association Council stressed the importance of continuing and intensifying a policy fully engaging the entire society. The Association Council welcomed the successful implementation of the visa free regime, highlighting that 360 000 citizens from the entire Republic of Moldova travelled to the Schengen area visa free between April and December 2014.

The Association Council noted the substantial increase in EU assistance provided to Moldova in recent years, with up to € 410 million available for the period 2014-2017. The EU called on Moldova to make the best use of this assistance in order to deliver on the ambitious reforms envisaged in the Association Agreement and the Association Agenda. It welcomed

that implementation work on the Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Area has smoothly begun as of 1 September and appreciated the substantial increase of exports from Moldova to the EU in 2014.

The Association Council confirmed that EU-Moldova cooperation in the field of energy is a priority, welcoming in particular the inauguration of the Iasi-Ungheni gas interconnector in August 2014 and the start of gas delivery from Romania to Moldova in March 2015. The Association Council recalled the importance of continuing work on a Ungheni-Chisinau pipeline as a further step towards diversification of supplies in view of increasing energy security at country and regional level.

The Association Council welcomed Moldova's participation in the EU Programme for the Competitiveness of Enterprises and Small and Medium-sized Enterprises "COSME" and its association to the EU Programme on Research and Innovation "Horizon 2020", with Moldova being the first Eastern Partner to join these programmes. The Council also stressed the importance of Moldova's participation in the Erasmus+ Programme supporting student mobility and academic cooperation. Moldova and the EU have also concluded the negotiations on the agreement for participation in the Creative Europe Programme which will provide further opportunities to strengthen relations in the field of culture. The Association Council furthermore discussed cooperation in the fields of economy, agriculture, and environment.

The Association Council underlined the importance of intensifying efforts towards reaching a comprehensive, peaceful settlement of the Transnistrian conflict based on the sovereignty and territorial integrity of the Republic of Moldova with a special status for Transnistria. It encouraged the sides to renew their constructive engagement with respect to the settlement talks, looking forward to a substantial round at the next 5+2 talks in the close future and an intensified dialogue in all formats. The EU stressed that the Association Agreement including its Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Area offers opportunities to the entire internationally recognized territory of Moldova and that the EU stands ready to support its full implementation to the benefit of all the people in Moldova and its international partners.

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