

EU-MOLDOVA PARLIAMENTARY COOPERATION COMMITTEE

NINTH MEETING

25-26 October 2006
STRASBOURG

Co-Chairmen: Mrs MIKKO and Mr STEPANIUC

Final Statement and Recommendations **pursuant to Article 89 of the Partnership and Cooperation Agreement**

Under the co-chairmanship of Mrs Marianne MIKKO (PES, Estonia) and Mr Victor STEPANIUC (Party of Moldovan Communists, Moldova) the ninth meeting of the EU-Moldova Parliamentary Cooperation Committee was held in Strasbourg on 25-26 October 2006. The Committee exchanged views with Mr Igor DODON, Minister of Economy and Trade, on behalf of the government of the Republic of Moldova, H.E. Mr Tapio SAARELA, Finnish Ambassador in Romania and Moldova, on behalf of the Finnish Presidency-in-Office of the Council of the European Union and Mrs Hilde HARDEMAN, Head of Unit for Moldova in DG RELEX, on behalf of the European Commission.

The Parliamentary Cooperation Committee agreed the following:

EU-Moldova relations

1. stresses that the Republic of Moldova has deep historical, cultural and economic links to the Member States of the European Union; reiterates its view that the EU-Moldova relationship must be based on shared common values with regard, in particular, to democracy, the rule of law and respect for human and civil rights; underlines that the development of the Republic of Moldova as a stable and prosperous country is in the shared interest of both the European Union and of Moldova itself;
2. underlines the importance of enhanced cooperation between the EU and Moldova aiming to contribute to stability, security and prosperity in the region and on the European continent as a whole and to prevent the emergence of new dividing lines;
3. welcomes the efforts made by the Moldovan authorities for the implementation of the EU-Moldova Action Plan; emphasises the importance of the Plan for reinforcing EU-Moldova relations and for underpinning political and economic reform in Moldova; stresses too that the successful implementation of the Action Plan should assist Moldova towards a significant degree of economic integration and a deepening of political cooperation with the EU; emphasises that pursuant to Article 49 of the Treaty on European Union, the EU accession prospect remains open for Moldova and according to provisions of the Action Plan the opportunity of a new contractual relationship between Moldova and EU may be considered after the provisions set out in that document are fulfilled;
4. commends the work of the European Commission Delegation in Chisinau and stresses that this delegation needs to strengthen significantly the political influence of the Union in the country and provide a focus for its activities;
5. welcomes the performance of the EU Special Representative (EUSR) for Moldova, in particular his efforts to a sustainable settlement of the Transnistria conflict, in accordance with agreed EU policy objectives and in close coordination with the OSCE; welcomes the enlargement of the negotiation process by involving the EU and USA as observers;

6. expresses satisfaction with the outcome of the first visit of the Speaker of the Parliament of the Republic of Moldova to the European Parliament in Brussels on 19-21 September 2006; welcomes his proposals to intensify relations between the European Parliament and the Moldovan Parliament through more frequent and regular contacts at political level.
7. proposes to use the future direct neighbourhood of Moldova to the European Union for the systematic development of the cross-border regional cooperation, as this instrument has proved to be useful in the past and could contribute to developing and stabilising relations between the EU and the Republic of Moldova;

Economic situation

7. aware of the fact that wine is Moldova's most important industry, with almost 80% having been exported to the Russian Federation until the date of the embargo, expresses its concern with regard to the embargo on Moldovan wines and agricultural products by the latter and the large losses produced by this ban; calls on the European Commission to prepare as soon as possible its recommendations on giving the Autonomous Trade Preferences and makes an appeal to the EU member states to support such a preferential regime; advises the Moldovan authorities to take the necessary measures in order to improve the quality of its wines and diversify its retail markets; welcomes the successes attained by the Moldovan authorities that resulted in adopting on 1 July 2006 of a new system regarding certification and checking the rules of goods origin. Emphasises the importance of due implementation of this system in compliance with the European Union requirements;
9. believes that to give as soon as possible the Autonomous Trade Preferences to Moldova would play down the negative impact the denunciation of the current Free Trade Agreement between Moldova and Romania will have on 1 January 2007.

Social aspects

10. expresses concern at the continuing reports of corruption and trafficking of human beings mainly from Moldova, especially of women and children: takes note of the establishment by the Moldovan authorities of a regional centre to tackle this scourge and stresses the need for concrete measures to rescue and rehabilitate the victims and bring the criminals to justice; underlines that information and public prosecution of those responsible in individual cases is the best and most persuasive way to prevent the repetition of this most inhuman trafficking and would therefore save many innocent women and children;
11. urges the Moldovan Government to take all necessary measures in its fight against corruption and organised crime; underlines the need for urgent measures to tackle widespread poverty in the country; welcomes therewith actions undertaken in this field by the Moldovan authorities;

Rule of law

12. recalls that the rule of law is an essential precondition for closer relations between the European Union and Moldova and stresses therefore that the strengthening of the relevant principles and effectiveness of institutions guaranteeing the rule of law is of the utmost importance;

13. calls for the reinforcement of Moldova's judicial capacity and further strengthening of the independence of judiciary;
14. welcomes the adoption of a set of legal acts on judiciary reform.

Human rights and freedom of expression in the Republic of Moldova

15. welcomes the conclusion of a recent Mission Report by the Bureau of the EU-Moldova PCC concerning the respect for human rights, in particular regarding freedom of expression in the Moldovan mass-media in accordance with international standards; urges therefore the Government of Moldova to ensure that the shortcomings identified regarding the implementation of the legal provisions of the newly adopted Law on the Audio-Visual Code are satisfactorily addressed;
16. stresses that opposition parties and minority interests must have a full opportunity to participate actively in the political course of the country; underlines that there should be no interference by the executive that restricts the free action of opposition parties;
17. urges the Moldovan authorities to observe more closely the respect of the rights of the media representatives in order to avoid incidents involving arrests of journalists;

Situation in the Transnistrian region

18. underlines that the resolution of the Transnistrian problem is a fundamental element in promoting economic prosperity and political stability in the whole of the Republic of Moldova; stresses again the need for a peaceful solution to the conflict, in line with the UN Charter and Conventions, OSCE declarations and with full respect for the sovereignty and territorial integrity of the Republic of Moldova within its internationally recognised borders;
19. calls again for the complete fulfilment of the OSCE Istanbul commitments and expresses concern over the lack of progress in the withdrawal of Russian arms and troops from the territory of Moldova; urges the Russian Federation to put pressure on the Tiraspol authorities to facilitate the process, making use of available levers;
20. commends the highly professional performance of the EU Border Assistance Mission on the Moldova-Ukraine border as welcome signs of enhanced engagement by the European Union in the search for a settlement of the Transnistria problem; stresses that better controls on the border are an essential element in bringing the conflict to an end; stresses the need for more investigatory powers to be granted to the border agencies, in particular with regard to activities involving concrete cases of organised crime; calls on the EUBAM to form the nucleus of a full ESDP mission in the future and to form part of a policy of greater EU engagement in Moldova;
21. welcomes the positive results in the cooperation between Moldova and Ukraine in the aftermath of the adoption of the new Customs Regime; it appeals to the Ukrainian authorities to continue this work together with the Moldovan counterparts;
22. welcomes the involvement of the Ukrainian authorities in the search for a resolution of the dispute and the initiative of President Yushchenko to promote a settlement within the framework of a democratic Moldova, in full accordance with the Law on Fundamental

Regulations of the Special Legal Status of Settlements on the left Bank of the River Dniestr (Transnistria) of 22 July 2005;

23. expresses great concern that manufacture of weapons and ammunition may be taking place in the region with the obvious inherent dangers;

Visa facilitation regime

24. takes note of the proposal put forward by the European Commission in June 2006 to set up a Common Visa Application Centre in Chisinau; appeals to the EU member states to actively support the idea to launch the Common Visa Application Centre in Moldova in 2007;
25. aware of the fact that the number of Moldovans applying for Romanian, Ukrainian and Russian citizenship is increasing; therefore appeals to the Member States of the European Union and the European Parliament to develop a visa policy that does not give an incentive for citizenship shopping;
26. calls on the European Commission to put forward in compliance with the JAI Council decision of 5 – 6 October 2006 till the end of 2006 a proposal for negotiating directives to negotiate with Moldova agreements on visa and readmission facilitation regime;
27. stresses that the visa facilitation agreement reached between the European Union and the Russian Federation is too limited to serve as a model for Moldova as it applies only to categories normally not faced with visa problems; points out that a visa facilitation agreement must focus on the whole population and especially those with a clean visa history.

Adopted unanimously.