

EU-MOLDOVA PARLIAMENTARY COOPERATION COMMITTEE

ELEVENTH MEETING

22-23 October 2008

STRASBOURG

Co-Chairs: Mrs Marianne MIKKO and Mr Grigore PETRENCU

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 Grigore PETRENCU (Party of Moldovan Communists, Moldova) the eleventh meeting of the EU-Moldova Parliamentary Cooperation Committee was held in Strasbourg on 22-23 October 2008. The Committee exchanged views with Mrs Elena MOCANU, on behalf of the Government of the Republic of Moldova, Mr Eric MILLET, on behalf of the French Presidency-in-Office of the Council of the European Union and Mr David GEER, on behalf of the European Commission.

The Parliamentary Cooperation Committee agreed the following:

The relations between the European Union and the Republic of Moldova

1. welcomes the European aspirations expressed by the Republic of Moldova and considers the European Neighbourhood Policy as an important instrument in fostering EU-Moldova political, economic and trade relations, and calls on the European Commission to further assist the Republic of Moldova in achieving the objectives of the ENP Action Plan; stresses that the European Neighbourhood Policy must not be used either to provide an alternative to EU membership perspectives nor to define the frontiers of the EU;
2. takes note of the present context of the EU-Moldova Partnership and Cooperation Agreement, which entered into force on 1 July 1998 for an initial 10 year period and of the preparation of negotiations on a new contractual relationship; calls on both parties to take advantage of this opportunity in order to conclude a new ambitious agreement that would bring the EU and the Republic of Moldova to a deeper level of involvement and cooperation; believes that the democratic conduct of the legislative elections to be held in the Republic of Moldova in March 2009, including the pre-electoral period, will be an important test of the EU-Moldova relations;

3. welcomes the progress made by the republic of Moldova in the implementation of the ENP Action Plan over the last three years; however, further and continuous efforts are needed in order to strengthen democracy and the rule of law, respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms, including the freedom of the media, *inter alia*, in the run-up to the parliamentary elections, to ensure the independence and impartiality of the judiciary, and to reinforce the fight against corruption, as well as to improve the investment climate, in particular the transparency and predictability of the regulatory framework;
4. urges the authorities of the Republic of Moldova to ensure that the 2009 parliamentary elections will be prepared and conducted fully in line with international standards;
5. welcomes the signature of a Joint Declaration on a Mobility Partnership between the European Union and the Republic of Moldova in June 2008, which aims at facilitating legal migration and fight against illegal immigration as well as against trafficking in and smuggling of human beings, while promoting capacity building and return policies, in line with the EU commitment towards a truly comprehensive and balanced migration policy and in full compliance with the principle of non-refoulement;
6. welcomes the entry into force of the EU-Moldova Visa Facilitation and Readmission Agreements; believes however that the citizens of the Republic of Moldova should benefit from a visa-free regime and calls on the EU authorities to take all necessary steps towards this objective;
7. also welcomes the entry into effect of the Autonomous Trade Preferences Agreement in March 2008;

Internal situation: political, economic and social issues

8. Urges the authorities of the Republic of Moldova to ensure a level-playing field for all political parties taking part in the 2009 parliamentary elections and equal access to the media in accordance with international standards; acknowledges the importance of the electoral process in state-building through continued democratic reforms, consolidation of the civil society and the political system;

9. takes note of the considerable number of citizens of the Republic of Moldova living abroad and considers it important to ensure the necessary conditions for their participation in the 2009 polls;
10. takes note of the concerns expressed by various international organisations brought about by the recent amendments to the Electoral Code, in particular increasing the threshold within the framework of a single constituency, prohibiting the pre-electoral blocks and restricting the access of persons holding double citizenship to the electoral process, regardless of the arguments that could explain those acts of discrimination;
11. calls on the authorities of the Republic of Moldova to take urgent measures towards the good functioning and the modernisation of the local public administration in order to ensure good governance, as well as the fair distribution of financial means in order to balance the local budgets and strengthen local democracy;
12. advises the authorities of the Republic of Moldova to redouble their efforts in order to tackle widespread poverty in the country, and focus on improving the living conditions of the Moldovan citizens in order to curb the emigration flow;
13. also urges the authorities of the Republic of Moldova to pay special attention to the institutionalised children, in particular regarding their physical development and access to adequate healthcare services and education; stresses that the temporary abandonment of these children should not be considered normal and to ensure their return to their natural families;
14. welcomes the National Development Strategy for 2008-2011 formulated by the new Prime Minister of the Republic of Moldova comprising of fiscal and monetary policy priorities including increasing the transparency of the financial sector to attract foreign investments and create employment; however, draws the attention of the Moldovan authorities to the fact that a weak administrative capacity could restrict progress on reforms;
15. while noting the sizeable grants coming in as budget support from the EU and various bilateral donors, including large remitted earnings, recommends to the authorities to keep control on any unforeseen expenditure, in particular as the 2009 elections approach; strongly advises against the use of national budget as an instrument in the pre-electoral campaign and calls for a balanced budgetary planning;

Respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms

16. stresses the importance of the implementation of legal and institutional reforms in the field of human rights, in particular freedom of speech, democracy and the rule of law;
17. stresses that a free and independent media is a pre-condition for the development of a democratic society; however, although the media legislative framework is broadly in line with European standards, draws attention of the authorities of the Republic of Moldova to the importance of the effective implementation of legislation; underline the need for the authorities of the Republic of Moldova to improve further the provisions of the Audiovisual Code, introducing clear mechanisms to ensure the autonomous and independent functioning of the Broadcasting Coordination Council, transforming Tele-radio Moldova into a genuine, independent public service broadcaster, developing the broadcasting sector by ensuring a transparent and duly motivated and justified allocation of frequencies; underline the importance that these measures be taken as a matter of priority and in line with OSCE and Council of Europe recommendations;
18. emphasises the importance of correct implementation in line with the letter and spirit of art. 11 of the European Convention on Human Rights; expresses concern with reported incidents of failure of local authorities and law enforcement agencies to implement correctly the provisions of the law; reminds the Moldovan authorities that freedom of assembly is an essential pre-condition for the functioning of a pluralist democracy;
19. urges the authorities of the Republic of Moldova to increase action against trafficking of women and girls in Moldova, especially since Moldova is a common country of origin;
20. recalls the abuse and harassment early this year of a number of young Moldovan citizens who expressed their political views via the Internet; urges the Moldovan authorities to respect the freedom of expression in any circumstances, in accordance with Moldova's commitments enshrined in the ENP Action Plan;
21. reminds the Moldovan Government of the commitments made to take all necessary measures to improve the living conditions in penitentiaries, and to eradicate torture and ill-treatment in pre-trial detention and during the prison sentence in general; urges the authorities to ensure the proper functioning of the newly established National Preventive mechanism under the Optional Protocol to the Convention against Torture, including through the allocation of appropriate resources;

22. emphasises the importance of the ratification by the Republic of Moldova of the Rome Statute on the International Criminal Court;

Regional cooperation

23. welcomes the Republic of Moldova's Presidency of the PABSEC and highlights the need for more concerted efforts by all the countries of the Black Sea region towards an improved cooperation in areas of common interest such as democracy, respect for human rights and good governance, resolution of the frozen conflicts, energy, transport, protection of environment, trade, research and education, science and technology, immigration management, employment and social affairs;
24. given the fact that Romania is the only EU Member neighbouring the Republic of Moldova , calls on the authorities of the countries of the region to make use of this opportunity in order to address this issue within the framework of the European Neighbourhood Policy and the Black Sea Synergy;
25. commends Moldova's participation in all regional projects such as the Central European Initiative, the South-East European Cooperation Process, GUAM, the Regional Cooperation Council. and CEFTA, thus contributing to strengthening regional cooperation; stresses, however, that the Moldovan authorities must do their utmost in order to develop relations with its neighbours;

The unresolved conflict in Transnistria

- 26 expresses concern about the recent armed conflict between Georgia and Russia, and about the possible implications that it might have in solving the Transnistrian conflict, and commends the prompt reaction of the EU and other international organisation to it;
27. while acknowledging the difference between the conflicts in Abkhazia and South Ossetia and the Transnistrian one, stresses that the resolution of the Transnistrian problem is a fundamental element in promoting economic prosperity and political stability in the Republic of Moldova; but also in promoting regional stability at the European Union's Eastern borders ;

28. calls for the resumption of transparent negotiations in the 5+2 format on finding the most appropriate solution to the Transnistrian problem in accordance with the principles of respect for the territorial integrity and sovereignty of the Republic of Moldova;
29. reiterates its call upon the Russian Federation to fulfil its commitments, in particular those undertaken at the OSCE Istanbul Summit in 1999, and unconditionally withdraw its military forces, under OSCE observation and verification, from the Transnistrian region of Moldova; also calls on the Russian Federation to remove or destroy all of its armaments and ammunition stockpiles in the region;
30. commends the excellent work of the EU Border Assistance Mission (EUBAM) on the border between the Republic of Moldova and Ukraine and welcomes the extension of the EUBAM's mandate until 30 November 2009.

Adopted unanimously.