



Plenary sitting

B9-0199/2023

12.4.2023

MOTION FOR A RESOLUTION

to wind up the debate on the statement by the Vice-President of the Commission / High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy

pursuant to Rule 132(2) of the Rules of Procedure

on the challenges facing the Republic of Moldova
(2023/2595(RSP))

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on behalf of the Renew Group

European Parliament resolution on the challenges facing the Republic of Moldova (2023/2595(RSP))

The European Parliament,

- having regard to its previous resolutions on the Republic of Moldova, Ukraine and Russia,
 - having regard to the Association Agreement between the European Union and the European Atomic Energy Community and their Member States, of the one part, and the Republic of Moldova, of the other part¹, which includes a Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Area and which fully entered into force on 1 July 2016,
 - having regard to Republic of Moldova’s application for EU membership of 3 March 2022 and the European Council’s consequent granting of candidate status on 23 June 2022 based on a positive assessment by the Commission and in line with the views expressed by the European Parliament,
 - having regard to the Commission Opinion of 17 June 2022 on the Republic of Moldova’s application for membership of the EU (COM(2022)0406),
 - having regard to the European Council conclusions of 23 March 2023,
 - having regard to the UN Charter, the Helsinki Final Act and subsequent documents, and the Charter of Paris for a New Europe,
 - having regard to Rule 132(2) of its Rules of Procedure,
- A. whereas the Russian Federation has been waging a war of aggression against Ukraine since 2014, fundamentally changing the geopolitical situation in Europe; whereas Russia’s war in Ukraine has had a significant humanitarian, economic and security impact on the neighbouring Republic of Moldova;
- B. whereas the Republic of Moldova has been disproportionately affected by the Russian war of aggression against Ukraine, having had to cope with an influx of over 700 000 Ukrainian refugees – proportionately more than any other country – with 84 000 of them still remaining in the country;
- C. whereas the Moldovan economy has been severely affected by lost trade, a decrease in foreign investment and increased energy and transport prices, all of which Russia has politically exploited to further its interests;
- D. whereas Russia has used its gas exports as a tool to pressure the Moldovan Government, including on its pro-European orientation, by artificially creating a gas supply crisis in autumn 2021 and in the latter part of 2022; whereas Russia’s weaponisation of energy has further exposed the fragility of the Moldovan energy sector; while the Republic of

¹ OJ L 260, 30.8.2014, p. 4.

Moldova's connections to the EU gas and electricity market and mechanisms have helped it to overcome the crisis; whereas despite all these attempts at destabilisation, the Moldovan people and the Moldovan leadership remain determined to follow the pro-European path that they have chosen;

- E. whereas the Republic of Moldova has condemned Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine since the beginning and has supported the territorial integrity of Ukraine;
- F. whereas in the early 1990s, Russia was a direct participant in the Transnistria War against the Moldovan state and has, since then, continued to sponsor the breakaway region of Transnistria, where it maintains military forces to this day; whereas the Cobasna depot, located within the Transnistrian region near the Ukraine-Moldova border, contains approximately 22 000 tonnes of Soviet-era ammunition and military equipment guarded by the Operational Group of Russian Forces; whereas, in spite of commitments made in 1999 and again in 2021, the Russian Federation has failed to ensure the full destruction of these weapons;
- G. whereas on 21 February 2023, the President of the Russian Federation, Vladimir Putin, revoked his decree of 7 May 2012 on measures to implement the foreign policy of the Russian Federation, which, among other things, committed Russia to seeking ways to resolve the separatist issue 'based on respect for the sovereignty, territorial integrity and neutral status of the Republic of Moldova in determining the special status of Transnistria';
- H. whereas the Russian Federation has been using provocation, disinformation and other hybrid means to undermine the stability and sovereignty of the Republic of Moldova; whereas in recent years, the Republic of Moldova has been dealing with an increase in cyberattacks and disinformation from Russian and pro-Russian sources and media outlets;
- I. whereas the Republic of Moldova is facing significant security risks, including the ongoing Russian hybrid war, economic difficulties and attempts to destabilise the current government;
- J. whereas Russian missiles targeting Ukraine have flown over Moldovan territory on several occasions, in clear violation of Moldova's sovereignty; whereas Moldova's air surveillance and air defence are in urgent need of investment and modernisation;
- K. whereas at least one high-ranking Russian military official has claimed that one of the goals of Russia's ongoing war of aggression against Ukraine is to create a land corridor to the Transnistrian region; whereas Russian officials have repeatedly and falsely claimed that the Russian-speaking population in the Republic of Moldova is oppressed;
- L. whereas on 9 February 2023, Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy informed the European Council that Ukraine had intercepted a Russian secret service plan to destroy the democratic system in Moldova and establish control over the country; whereas this was later confirmed by the President of the Republic of Moldova, Maia Sandu, who declared that the country had received intelligence that suggested that Russia was plotting to violently overthrow the country's pro-European leadership;

- M. whereas Russia is using internal, pro-Russian oligarchs and political forces, such as the Șor party, to destabilise the political situation in the country; whereas the leader of the Șor party, Ilan Șor, fled the Republic of Moldova in 2019 after being convicted of money laundering and embezzlement in a bank fraud scandal that resulted in the equivalent of USD 1 billion being siphoned away from Moldova's banking system; whereas Moldovan prosecutors are seeking his extradition from Israel and have also accused his party of receiving illegal financing;
- N. whereas the Moldovan Government has called on the EU to impose sanctions on fugitive oligarch Ilan Șor, whom it accuses of helping Russia to wage a hybrid war against the government in Chișinău by spreading social unrest in a bid to topple Moldova's pro-European government; whereas oligarchs Ilan Șor and Vladimir Plahotniuc have been sanctioned by the United States and the United Kingdom for their involvement in the bank fraud worth USD 1 billion and other illicit schemes;
- O. whereas the Republic of Moldova submitted its application to join the EU on 3 March 2022, attesting to the determination of the Moldovan authorities and its citizens to advance Moldova's European integration; whereas the Republic of Moldova is now a candidate country for EU membership;
- P. whereas EU-Moldova relations have intensified over the past year, based on a mutual commitment to strengthen their political association and deepen their economic integration; whereas the Council conclusions of 13 December 2022 on enlargement and stabilisation and association process put emphasis on further deepening the EU's sectoral cooperation with Moldova and its integration into the EU single market; whereas the EU and its Member States have provided significant political, economic, and humanitarian support to the Republic of Moldova, and have been actively engaged in promoting the rule of law, democracy and reforms in the country; whereas continued comprehensive and significant financial support is needed to support the Republic of Moldova on its European path; whereas the European Council conclusions of 23 March 2023 reaffirmed the EU's determination to continue providing all relevant support to the Republic of Moldova and tasked the Commission with presenting a support package ahead of its next meeting; whereas an ambitious and comprehensive support package is essential both for countering destabilising activities by external actors and for sustaining the country's accession path;
1. Expresses its full solidarity with the people of the Republic of Moldova during this difficult period; strongly condemns Russia's attempts to destabilise the Republic of Moldova and its government and society, including through the use of hybrid means; calls on the Russian authorities to respect the Republic of Moldova's independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity, to cease its provocations and attempts to destabilise the country, to withdraw its military forces from the territory of the Republic of Moldova and to support a peaceful and sustainable resolution of the Transnistrian conflict, in line with the principles of international law;
 2. Calls for the EU and its Member States to closely monitor the situation in the Republic of Moldova, and to take action to counter the Russian Federation's use of hybrid means; calls for the EU to step up its support to the Republic of Moldova, including by providing more technical resources and expertise in combating disinformation,

cyberattacks and other hybrid attacks; calls on the Commission and the European External Action Service to improve strategic communication about the EU in the Republic of Moldova; calls on the Commission and the Member States to continue supporting the independence of the media in the Republic of Moldova, as well as the efforts to increase society-wide media literacy and critical analysis skills in order to improve the population's ability to detect disinformation;

3. Welcomes the determination and responsibility with which the Moldovan authorities have managed to uncover and counteract Russian-backed attempts to destabilise the government;
4. Calls on the Member States to establish and swiftly launch an ambitious EU advisory civilian mission in the Republic of Moldova under the common security and defence policy to provide support in enhancing the resilience of the Republic of Moldova's security sector in the area of crisis management and in countering hybrid and cyber threats and disinformation and calls on the Member States to properly staff and fund such a mission;
5. Welcomes the Moldovan authorities' clear condemnation of Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine and welcomes the government's pledge to align with the EU's restrictive measures against Russia;
6. Calls on the Member States to increase the contributions that the Republic of Moldova receives from the European Peace Facility, through longer-term and predictable annual allocations, which, among other things, would allow Moldova to improve its air surveillance and air defence, and thereby also increase EU security at the EU's borders;
7. Calls for the EU and its Member States to establish a sanctions regime against those that have used any means to attempt to destabilise the Republic of Moldova and undermine its security, stability and constitutional order; calls on the Member States, in this context, to consider sanctioning fugitive oligarchs Ilan Șor and Vladimir Plahotniuc;
8. Calls for the EU and its Member States to consolidate the EU Support Hub for Internal Security and Border Management in Moldova, to improve cooperation with the Republic of Moldova on the exchange of classified information and to increase their support to Moldova's Ministry of Internal Affairs;
9. Reaffirms its commitment to the Republic of Moldova's membership of the European Union; believes that it would represent a geostrategic investment in a united and strong Europe; encourages EU and Member State leaders to continue to invest in political dialogue with the Republic of Moldova and to visit the country, including as a way of showing the EU's commitment to Moldova's European future;
10. Welcomes the Moldovan authorities considerable efforts to advance the reform agenda and their determination to fulfil the nine steps identified in the Commission's opinion of 17 June 2022 in order to advance towards EU membership, despite Russia's pressure on Moldova and the crises triggered by Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine; encourages the Republic of Moldova to continue resolutely with its reform agenda; encourages the government to work with all stakeholders on achieving a profound, sustainable and comprehensive justice and anti-corruption reform, in line with EU and

Venice Commission recommendations; calls on the Moldovan authorities to continue and further strengthen their efforts to fight corruption, in particular by clarifying the mandates of the country's specialised anti-corruption institutions and by strengthening the effectiveness of the National Anticorruption Center and the National Integrity Authority;

11. Calls on the Commission to attach clear and measurable criteria to the nine steps identified for the Republic of Moldova to advance towards EU membership;
12. Reiterates its call for an innovative, complementary and flexible interaction between the implementation of the Association Agreement and the accession negotiation process, allowing for the Republic of Moldova's gradual integration into the EU single market, based on a priority action plan and relevant sectoral programmes and providing access to relevant EU funds, enabling Moldovan citizens to reap the benefits of accession throughout the process rather than only at its completion;
13. Looks forward to the Commission assessment on Moldova's fulfilment of the nine steps identified in the Commission's opinion of 17 June 2022 as part of the 2023 enlargement package; calls on the Commission and the European Council in this context to start EU accession negotiations by the end of 2023, upon the fulfilment of the nine recommendations;
14. Calls for the EU and its Member States to support the Republic of Moldova's integration by incorporating the country into EU programmes, instruments and agencies, such as the EU single market programme, the digital Europe programme, the EU Civil Protection Mechanism, the European Environment Agency, the Connecting Europe Facility and the European Defence Agency;
15. Calls for the EU and its Member States to continue to provide political, economic, and humanitarian support to the Republic of Moldova, including through the Moldova Support Platform launched in 2022, and to promote the rule of law, democracy, and reforms in the country; calls for the EU and its Member States to step up financial and technical assistance to support a speedy, irreversible and effective EU integration process for the Republic of Moldova and calls for financial assistance to the Republic of Moldova to be given in the form of direct budget support in particular; calls for political briefings to be delivered to the Republic of Moldova before and after Council meetings, in line with the current practice for the Western Balkans countries;
16. Welcomes the Commission's disbursement of a EUR 10 million grant on 5 April 2023, as part of the second instalment of the ongoing macro-financial assistance (MFA) to the Republic of Moldova, worth EUR 150 million in total; expects that the payment of a further EUR 40 million in loans will follow at the beginning of May 2023; calls on the Commission to swiftly disburse the EUR 105 million in budgetary support announced in November 2022 in order to shore up Moldova's macroeconomic and financial stabilisation efforts, in line with its key reforms; welcomes the Commission proposal to increase the MFA by an additional EUR 145 million;
17. Welcomes the temporary liberalisation measures to support the Republic of Moldova's economy by granting annual duty-free tariff-rate quotas to overcome the loss of its export markets in Russia, Belarus and Ukraine; calls for the EU to take swift and

significant steps towards liberalising its tariff-rate quotas in order to ensure predictability and increase the Republic of Moldova's medium- to long-term attractiveness for investors, while continuing to support the Moldovan economy; recalls that the liberalisation of the wine sector did not affect the EU single market while bringing benefits to Moldovan producers, contributing decisively to the modernisation of the wine sector and increasing its economic efficiency; notes that, as agriculture is a key economic sector for the Republic of Moldova, the aforementioned measures should also be accompanied by support for the sustainability of Moldova's agricultural production;

18. Calls for the EU, given the structure of the Republic of Moldova's small economy and based on positive audit assessments, to further allow the import of Moldovan animal-derived goods and to include Moldovan farmers in the compensation mechanism for producers affected by the market disruption stemming from the war in Ukraine;
19. Calls for the EU and its institutions to support the Republic of Moldova's efforts towards modernising its payment system in order to fulfil the conditions for integration into the Single Euro Payments Area and to take the necessary steps to extend the EU's roam like at home policy to the Republic of Moldova;
20. Calls for the EU and its Member States to continue to support the Republic of Moldova in achieving energy independence, including by increasing its generating capacity, connectivity, diversification and energy efficiency; calls for the EU to use emergency funding to enhance the Republic of Moldova's connection to the EU's electricity network and to increase EU financial and technical support to the level necessary to ensure Moldova's resilience against energy-related external pressure; calls for the EU to further allocate financial resources for energy efficiency in residential buildings and renewables in order to contribute to the Republic of Moldova's energy independence;
21. Encourages the Republic of Moldova to make full use of the joint gas purchasing mechanism through the EU Energy Platform to ensure its security of supply and access to affordable energy; calls on the EU institutions to assist the Republic of Moldova in this effort;
22. Calls for the EU to further support the rehabilitation of and upgrades to the rail infrastructure in the Republic of Moldova, as well as the port of Giurgiulesti, as part of a solution for regional and global food-security concerns and as a way of supporting the economies of the Republic of Moldova and Ukraine;
23. Encourages the organisation of bilateral parliamentary meetings between the parliaments of the Member States and the Parliament of the Republic of Moldova, as well as between the Commission and the Government of the Republic of Moldova, and recommends considering ways to bring forward the moment at which observers from the Republic of Moldova could take up their seats in the European Parliament, such as by linking it to the closing of negotiations on specific clusters; commits to increasing its own assistance to the Parliament of the Republic of Moldova in order to better support, through dialogue and capacity building, the country's European path;
24. Recalls that consolidating the Republic of Moldova's administrative capacity is a key requirement set out in the Commission's opinion of 17 June 2022; takes note of the

impact of Russia's war against Ukraine on the Republic of Moldova's strained budget and administrative capacities; calls on the Moldovan authorities, in this regard, to continue their efforts to increase the quality and capacity of the public administration personnel working on EU accession; encourages the Commission to second EU officials to Moldovan ministries; calls on the Commission, given the Republic of Moldova's challenges and status as an EU candidate country, to further increase its staff capacity dealing with and supporting the accession process for the Republic of Moldova, both in Brussels and in Chişinău;

25. Stresses that cooperation with and the involvement of civil society will be the foundation of any successful implementation of the necessary reforms to bring the Republic of Moldova closer to the EU; calls on the EU institutions and the Member States to increase their support to civil society in the Republic of Moldova;
26. Instructs its President to forward this resolution to the Council, the Commission, the Vice-President of the Commission / High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, the Government and Parliament of the Republic of Moldova, the Russian Federation, the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe, the United Nations and the Council of Europe.