



Plenary sitting

B9-0200/2023

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 S&D 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, in particular those of 23 June 2022 on the candidate status of Ukraine, the Republic of Moldova and Georgia¹, of 19 May 2022 on the implementation of the EU Association Agreement with the Republic of Moldova² and of 5 May 2022 on the state of play of EU-Moldova cooperation³, and to its position of 24 March 2022 on the proposal for a decision of the European Parliament and of the Council on providing macro-financial assistance to the Republic of Moldova (COM(2022)0004 – C9-0007/2022 – 2021/0438(COD))⁴,
 - having regard to its previous resolutions on the Russian war of aggression against Ukraine,
 - 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 Council conclusions of 24 June 2022 on the membership applications of Ukraine, the Republic of Moldova and Georgia, – having regard to the Commission analytical reports of 2 February 2023 on Ukraine’s, Moldova’s and Georgia’s alignment with the EU *acquis*,
 - having regard to the Commission staff working document of 7 February 2023 entitled Association Implementation Report on the Republic of Moldova (SWD(2023)0041),
 - having regard to United Nations General Assembly resolution 72/282 of 22 June 2018 on the complete and unconditional withdrawal of foreign military forces from the territory of the Republic of Moldova,
 - having regard to Rule 132(2) of its Rules of Procedure,
- A. whereas the Republic of Moldova is a close and valued partner of the EU; whereas its application for EU Membership, and the European Council’s decision to grant candidate status to the Republic of Moldova on the understanding that nine steps are taken, demonstrates a strong joint ambition for swift EU integration; whereas through the Association Agreement and the Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Area (AA/DCFTA), in force since 2016, the EU and Moldova have committed to promoting political association and achieving economic integration;
- B. whereas the people of the Republic of Moldova have confirmed their solidarity with Ukraine by sheltering the largest per-capita number of Ukrainian refugees in Europe

¹ OJ C 32, 27.1.2023, p. 2.

² OJ C 479, 16.12.2022, p. 2.

³ OJ C 465, 6.12.2022, p. 151.

⁴ OJ C 361, 20.9.2022, p. 36.

following Russia's brutal war of aggression; whereas a clear majority of Moldovan citizens supports EU membership;

- C. whereas the Government of the Republic of Moldova has embarked on a political, judicial, and institutional reform process of unprecedented ambition and has demonstrated its steadfast determination to fulfil the nine steps identified in the Commission opinion in order to meet the conditions set for the opening of accession negotiations; whereas the Moldovan Government's enhanced implementation of existing agreements demonstrates its commitment to closer cooperation with and integration into the Union;
- D. whereas EU accession remains a merit-based process conditional upon the fulfilment of established criteria and conditions;
- E. whereas the Republic of Moldova's democracy has demonstrated its resilience in the face of Russian disinformation and propaganda during the recent re-shuffling of the government and despite increased subversive activity on the part of the Russian Federation and Russian-sponsored actors;
- F. whereas the unprovoked, unjustified and illegal war of aggression launched by the Russian Federation against Ukraine profoundly affects regional security and stability and endangers the Republic of Moldova's socio-economic recovery after the pandemic, its macroeconomic situation and financial stability, as well as its democratic development and social cohesion, while further increasing the incidence and severity of poverty, inflation and emigration; whereas the Russian Federation, in cooperation with domestic Russia-sponsored actors, galvanises and utilises the resultant widespread economic uncertainty to delegitimise and foster opposition to the government's pro-European policies;
- G. whereas on 13 February 2023, Moldovan President Maia Sandu stated that the Russian Federation was conspiring with local actors to overthrow the legitimate and democratically elected Moldovan Government through orchestrated violent actions disguised as organic opposition protests with the objective of fomenting insurrection;
- H. whereas the active measures envisaged as part of this conspiracy include establishing and promoting front organisations disguised as NGOs and 'cultural centres', disseminating online and offline disinformation with the aim of establishing strong pro-Russian political and societal constituencies and returning the Republic of Moldova to a state of dependency on Russian hydrocarbons, and taking steps that could result in armed escalation in the occupied Transnistrian region of the Republic of Moldova;
- I. whereas pro-Russian oligarchs Ilan Shor and Vladimir Plahotniuc, presently in exile in relation to charges of money laundering and embezzlement, are suspected of cooperating with the Russian Federation in order to undermine the Government of the Republic of Moldova; whereas the Shor Party, presided over by Mr Shor, has reportedly actively recruited, arranged logistics for and provided financial compensation to individuals to join its protests since August 2022;
- J. whereas on 21 February 2023, the President of the Russian Federation Vladimir Putin revoked the executive order of 7 May 2012 on Measures to Implement the Russian

Federation Foreign Policy, which, *inter alia*, affirmed the Russian Federation's commitment to find a solution to the Transnistrian conflict that would respect the territorial integrity and neutrality of the Republic of Moldova in setting up a special status for Transnistria;

- K. whereas Russia's long-running multi-channel disinformation, propaganda, and political manipulation campaigns in the Republic of Moldova have escalated since its full-scale invasion of Ukraine on 24 February 2022; whereas Russia's subversive activities in the Moldovan information space seek to undermine wide-spread popular support for temporarily displaced Ukrainians and the European Union, tie down Ukrainian forces on the southern border, and foster enhanced destabilisation;
- L. whereas in 2021, Russia created a gas supply crisis in the Republic of Moldova; whereas the EU provided Moldova with a EUR 60 million budget support programme in December 2021 and announced a further EUR 250 million in November 2022 to mitigate the impact of rising prices and help Moldova to meet its energy needs; Whereas while Moldova has diversified its natural gas supplies away from the Russian Federation, its electricity supply remains largely dependent on the Russian-owned Cuciurgan power station in the Transnistrian region;
- M. whereas the Cobasna depot, located within the Transnistrian region on the Ukraine-Moldova border, contains approximately 22 000 tonnes of Russian 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; whereas concerns persist that this equipment might be utilised in armed conflict in either an operational capacity or to exert pressure on the Moldovan and Ukrainian authorities;
- N. whereas more than 780 000 refugees from Ukraine have been taken in by Moldova since the beginning of the Russian war of aggression; whereas the Republic of Moldova currently hosts 107 000 refugees on its territory;
- O. whereas the Union has provided the Republic of Moldova with EUR 1.09 billion in loans and grants since October 2021 to strengthen its resilience, including budget support, macro-financial assistance, humanitarian aid and assistance under the Union Civil Protection Mechanism and the Moldova Support Platform; whereas the second instalment of the EUR 105 million in macro-financial assistance that was promised in November 2022 has still not been disbursed;
- P. whereas the Republic of Moldova remains committed to the de-oligarchisation condition set out in the Commission opinion; whereas efforts to this end have included the draft law on de-oligarchisation, the legislation on media ownership and the adoption of the new strategy on the management of state property, state enterprises and entities with state capital 2022-2030;
- Q. whereas the Council adopted assistance measures worth EUR 7 million in 2021 for the benefit of the Military Medical Service and the Engineering Battalion of the Armed Forces of the Republic of Moldova and EUR 40 million in 2022 in further non-lethal military assistance under the European Peace Facility (EPF);

- R. whereas on 22 June 2018, the UN General Assembly urged the Russian Federation to complete, unconditionally and without further delay, the orderly withdrawal of its forces and armaments from the territory of the Republic of Moldova; whereas an estimated 1 500 Russian troops remain illegally within Moldova's internationally recognised borders; whereas the independence, sovereignty, and full territorial integrity of the Republic of Moldova is recognised by all member states of the United Nations;
1. Expresses its full and unshakeable support for the independence, sovereignty, and territorial integrity of the Republic of Moldova; strongly condemns any attempts by the Russian Federation or Russian-sponsored local proxies to destabilise the Republic of Moldova utilising hybrid attacks, the weaponisation of energy supplies, disinformation, and staged protests as well as by threatening or using violence;
 2. Praises the solidarity shown by the Moldovan population towards the people fleeing Russia's war of aggression in Ukraine, the destruction of Ukraine's cities and towns and the atrocities and war crimes committed by Russia against, in particular, the civilian population of Ukraine; expresses its conviction that the EU must demonstrate the same degree of solidarity with the people of Moldova and support as determinedly as possible the country's efforts to cope with the consequences of Russia's war of aggression and with the destabilisation attempts of Russia and pro-Russian actors;
 3. Calls on the Commission to continue delivering humanitarian support via the EU Civil Protection Mechanism, activated on 25 February 2022, border management support via the European Border and Coast Guard Agency (Frontex) and the relocated EU Border Assistance Mission to Moldova and Ukraine, and support for the transfer of persons to EU Member States in the context of the Solidarity Platform as necessary;
 4. Reiterates its call on the Commission as well as on the Moldovan authorities to take into account the particular needs of refugee children from Ukraine currently staying in Moldova; calls on the Commission and the Member States to support the Moldovan authorities in setting up support programmes for refugee women, in particular those in need of specialised support for victims of gender-based violence;
 5. Calls on the Council, the Commission and the European External Action Service (EEAS) to thoroughly assess existing support measures, taking into account the increased security risks for the Republic of Moldova and the need to strengthen the resilience of Moldova's state institutions, armed forces and society against external attempts at destabilisation and provocation; welcomes the proposal to establish the EU Partnership Mission in Moldova, a civilian common security and defence policy (CSDP) mission, to provide tailored support in countering cyber threats, hybrid threats and disinformation; urges the Council to prioritise approval of the CSDP mission at the Foreign Affairs Council of 22 May 2023;
 6. Calls on the Council swiftly to adopt additional support measures under the EPF to enhance Moldova's defence capacities, building on the EUR 7 million adopted in December 2021 and EUR 40 million adopted in June 2022 to enhance the combat-readiness, modernisation and enlargement of the Armed Forces of the Republic of Moldova; welcomes the enhanced cooperation of the Republic of Moldova with the EU Agencies for Law Enforcement Cooperation (Europol) and Law Enforcement Training

(CEPOL) and Frontex, as well as the close cooperation within the framework of the EU Support Hub for Internal Security and Border Management in Moldova;

7. Endorses the continued work under the high-level political and security dialogue between the EU and the Republic of Moldova to enhance cooperation on foreign and security policy, raise relevant issues of concern for regional security and stability and discuss possibilities for close coordination and effective assistance and support measures; expresses its appreciation for the Republic of Moldova's participation in the EU Training Mission to Mali and its intention to contribute to the EU Training Mission in Somalia and EUFOR ALTHEA in Bosnia and Herzegovina, as expressed during the recent second high-level political and security dialogue, as well as to intensify cooperation on countering hybrid threats; commends the Republic of Moldova's gradually increasing coordination regarding, and alignment with, the common foreign and security policy (CFSP); underlines the significance of Moldova's adoption of restrictive measures against the Russian Federation in line with the CFSP;
8. Insists on the need for the Council and the Commission equally to continue supporting the efforts of the Moldovan authorities to maintain macro-economic stability, guarantee the Republic of Moldova's full energy security, swiftly work towards its energy independence from Russia while ensuring energy affordability, in particular for the most vulnerable, and carry through their ambitious reforms in the areas of democracy and the rule of law; calls on the Commission to present a comprehensive support strategy for the Republic of Moldova prior to the European Council meeting of 29 June 2023;
9. Welcomes the Commission's proposal of 24 January 2023 to increase ongoing macro-financial assistance for the Republic of Moldova by up to EUR 145 million, of which up to EUR 45 million in grants, which would bring the total amount of ongoing EU macro-financial assistance to the country to EUR 295 million, and confirms its readiness to support this measure; welcomes the disbursement of the second instalment of the ongoing macro-financial assistance package worth EUR 50 million, on 5 April 2023, and calls on the Commission to disburse the budgetary support announced in November 2022 without delay; highlights the need to include the Republic of Moldova in the Instrument for Pre-Accession Assistance in the light of its candidate status for EU membership; stresses the significance of ensuring synergies between EU programmes and additional resources provided by EU and international financial institutions, Member States, like-minded partners and other donors;
10. Expresses its support for the Republic of Moldova's far-reaching efforts to reduce its energy dependency on Russia; encourages the country to fully diversify its energy sources, increase its interconnection with the European energy networks and accelerate the development of renewable energy sources; underlines the critical nature of EU and partner contributions towards alleviating the impact of Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine on Moldovan energy prices, notably the EUR 250 million energy and budgetary support package announced on 10 November 2022 in the context of the energy rescue scheme, and calls for the provision of further assistance as needed; welcomes efforts to build electricity interconnectors with neighbouring Romania, reducing Moldova's dependency on energy produced in the Transnistrian region, as well as the programme of investment in the modernisation of the Moldovan electricity

distribution grid, which is jointly financed by the European Investment Bank and the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development; encourages Moldova to make full use of the joint gas purchasing mechanism through the EU Energy Platform to access more affordable energy and ensure security of supply;

11. Takes note of the actions of the Moldovan authorities against Russian propaganda, including the suspension of the broadcasting licenses of six pro-Russian TV stations; calls on the Commission and the EEAS to further strengthen cooperation with the Republic of Moldova to enhance the country's resilience to hybrid threats, including through the joint development of a strategy to safeguard the integrity and security environment of the 2023 local elections, 2024 presidential elections and 2025 parliamentary elections, to support the work of journalists and civil society organisations seeking to counter disinformation;
12. Calls on the Commission and the Moldovan authorities to strengthen their strategic communications with the Moldovan population; further calls for specific online content moderation measures sensitive to the Moldovan disinformation context to be developed and implemented by relevant social media organisations;
13. Encourages the Government, parliament and president of Moldova to continue the ambitious reforms on democracy and rule of law on which the country has made significant progress, and in particular to continue the judicial reform, the fight against corruption and the investigation and prosecution of the 2014 bank fraud scandal while ensuring the primacy of quality and sustainability over speed; recalls the importance of establishing a credible track record of prosecutions and convictions for corruption on the basis of proactive and efficient investigations as a matter of the greatest priority; calls on the Commission and the EEAS to swiftly come forward with a legislative proposal extending the scope of the EU Global Human Rights Sanctions Regime to include acts of corruption as a punishable offence; further calls on the Commission to clarify the necessary reforms under the de-oligarchisation condition in the light of the Venice Commission recommendations;
14. Underlines the importance of advancing the country's reform process in order to improve the living standards of the population, especially of the more vulnerable population groups and those in the regions, and to provide the younger generations with attractive prospects for life and work in the country, thereby reducing the number of citizens who feel the need to leave the country to seek better living conditions elsewhere in Europe;
15. Strongly endorses the European Council's decision of 23 June 2023 to grant EU candidate status to the Republic of Moldova; recognises the government's progress in terms of reforms and level of alignment with the EU *acquis*; looks forward to the progress achieved with respect to the priorities identified in the Commission opinion on Moldova's application for membership of the EU as part of the 'enlargement package' due in autumn 2023; calls on the Moldovan authorities to enhance their work towards the full and effective implementation of the AA/DCFTA as well as on democracy, governance and rule of law reforms, as a demonstration of their ambition to enjoy the rights and fulfil the obligations of an EU member;

16. Underlines the central role of a functioning, independent and credible judiciary in the maintenance and promotion of the rule of law; welcomes President Sandu's proposal for the establishment of a new anti-corruption court before the summer; expresses its support for the pre-vetting procedure of judges and prosecutors to assume positions on the Superior Council of Magistracy (SCM) and the Superior Council of Prosecutors, and encourages all relevant actors, in particular the General Assembly of Judges, to ensure that remaining positions on the SCM are filled swiftly and in accordance with the high standards set for the integrity of its members;
17. Reiterates its support for the independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity of the Republic of Moldova and for the efforts in the framework of the 5+2 negotiation process to reach a peaceful, comprehensive and lasting political settlement of the Transnistrian conflict, based on respect for the sovereignty and territorial integrity of the Republic of Moldova within its internationally recognised borders and with a special status for the Transnistrian region; calls on the Russian Federation, therefore, to completely withdraw its military forces and equipment from the Transnistrian region of the Republic of Moldova and to ensure the immediate evacuation and full destruction of all ammunition and equipment in the Cobasna depot under international oversight;
18. Calls on all political actors to contribute towards fulfilling the European aspirations of the people of Moldova, by seeking to establish consensus over the most important and urgent reforms, actively engaging in the legislative work of the Parliament of Moldova with the aim of further harmonising Moldova's legislation with EU standards, and engaging with civil society over all major reforms as well as the country's European orientation; expresses its willingness to contribute to supporting and strengthening parliamentary democracy in the Republic of Moldova, including through the Jean Monnet Dialogue, when appropriate within its domestic context;
19. Instructs its President to forward this resolution to the Vice-President of the Commission / High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, the Council, the Commission, the governments and parliaments of the Member States, the Council of Europe, the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe, and the President, Government and Parliament of the Republic of Moldova.