

STATEMENT

**by H.E. Mrs. Larisa MICULET, Ambassador of the Republic of Moldova to Ireland,
at the session of the Joint Committee on European Union Affairs of the Oireachtas
(Dublin, 15 March 2022)**

Mr. Chairman,
Distinguished members of the Committee,

At the outset, please allow me to express deep gratitude for the opportunity to address and brief this respectable Committee on Moldova's application for membership of the European Union.

As this is the first official appearance of an Ambassador of the Republic of Moldova to Oireachtas since the opening of the Embassy in July 2019, before moving on to the topic of today's discussion, allow me to state the following.

Diplomatic relations between our countries, which will mark the 23rd anniversary in September 2022, are strong, based on mutual values and interests. The decision to open the Embassy shows a significant interest in promoting bilateral ties between the two states, strengthening friendship, and diversifying cooperation.

As well, I welcome the recent establishment of the Ireland-Moldova Parliamentary Friendship Group, which will serve as a valuable vehicle in developing stronger ties between our legislatures.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

The today's Committee discussion of the topic of tremendous importance for my country, is taking place in a very complicated context of regional security. The leadership of the Republic of Moldova has strongly condemned the Russia's military aggression against the sovereign country Ukraine and stated that Moldova fully respects Ukraine's territorial integrity, sovereignty, and independence within its internationally recognised borders. The Republic of Moldova immediately turned its solidarity into concrete actions, where it has a greater impact – in helping refugees.

Despite the regional situation, the Government firmly pursuing its goal of EU integration and has reiterated its firm commitment to continue the reform process, to fight corruption, to reform the judiciary, to develop the infrastructure, to strengthen democracy. Therefore, on 3rd of March 2022, the Republic of Moldova submitted the letter of application to join the EU. This is a major step forward on our European journey – a journey that was not always easy and smooth, but with a very clear destination – EU membership.

Today, after 30 years of independence during which we experienced many steps back, achieved important successes and learned the hard lessons, the Republic of Moldova is ready to take responsibility for a prosperous and peaceful future in the European family. There are two dimensions of this process that we want to bring to your attention today:

The first one relates to the Fundamentals:

- Moldova declared firmly its European choice as the only way to ensure development and prosperity of the country. Our European ambitions are strongly rooted into our common history and culture.
- We speak a European language and share common values and principles with EU member states.
- Moldova is at the border of EU; we are part of Europe, and our future is destined to be European.
- We are undergoing a transformation process aimed towards irreversible changes in our society, economy, and governance. We remain focused on consolidating democracy, rule of law, respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms, as indispensable elements lying at the heart of EU political and economic integration.
- Starting from 2014, the EU-Moldova Association Agreement stands at the core of our bilateral dialogue and is a valuable guide of our reform agenda. We continue to make progress on transposing and implementing European standards into national legislation and work towards true transformations in a broad spectrum of areas of common interest.
- Over the years, together with our European partners, we achieved notable successes on our European path. The implementation of the Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Area (DCFTA) resulted in an increase in the number and volume of trade transforming the EU into the most important trading partner of Moldova. More than 60% of the exported goods go to EU market and other 40% of imports for our country is sourced in the EU.

The second dimension of our important step towards approaching EU lies in the current regional context:

- The Russian invasion of the neighbouring Ukraine and the continuing military conflict created a new political and security environment.
- There are important decisions that must be taken quickly and decisively, especially now when all of us are confronted with a changing landscape of the world. Our EU membership application is one of those examples.
- Current dramatic circumstances forced us to accelerate this important step that inevitably in the future would have had to be taken. We consider now to be the appropriate time to match our strong ambitions with concrete actions.
- We understand that probably our decision took some EU member states by surprise, but I assure you that partners who work closely with Moldova know how strong our commitment on implementing reforms is.

Following this important decision, we are fully aware that we need to move fast, decisively, and proactively implementing reforms in good governance, anticorruption, rule of law and other key areas.

At the same time, it is rather obvious that under these very different circumstances, old formats of cooperation with EU might not prove as efficient as they previously used to be. New approaches centred around a concrete and credible membership perspective for aspiring countries need to be established. This should also materialize in more robust programs and initiatives aimed to bring Moldova closer to EU.

We are determined to identify new avenues of deepening our relationship with EU. As an immediate priority we look forward to scaling up the integration efforts on several priority directions:

- Trade. The EU is the main commercial partner of the Republic of Moldova. The DCFTA implementation has triggered a profound transformation of the economy, the way of thinking and functioning in terms of the quality of goods and the diversification of products, competitiveness, and management. For Moldova, the economic implications of the military conflict in Ukraine are expected to result in disrupted supply and value chains with and through Ukraine. Other long-term effects are still hard to estimate now. We had to identify immediate measures to reorientate the commercial flows and transport routes. But in the longer run we will need to do more together to ensure the economic and financial stability of the country.
- Transport. We continue to focus on the implementation of the TEN-T network that will enable greater transport connectivity with the EU. The development of strategic and priority transport corridors will lay the way forward to progressive integration of Moldova into the EU market.
- Energy. Strengthening the energy resilience is one of the key elements of cooperation with external partners. Currently our efforts are channelled towards two priority dimensions – gas and electricity interconnection with the EU and the diversification of supply. We hope for an accelerated process of full synchronisation of Ukraine and Moldova with the EU electricity system. At the same time, we continue to work closely with our partners to overcome the challenges posed by the gas crisis and reduce dependency on the only one source of supply.
- Security. The current military conflict highlighted the importance of the security dimension. In current circumstances, our priority to raise to a new level the security and defense cooperation with EU is even more stringent. We look forward to launching the High-level political and security dialogue with the EU that was agreed at the Association Council in late October 2021. We seek EU's support in promoting the security sector reform and deepen cooperation on hybrid threats, Stratcom, cyber security and information-sharing. We welcome the assistance offered through the new European Peace Facility (EPF instrument), which in 2021 was directed towards strengthening the capabilities of our Military Medical facilities and Engineering Corps, and we look forward to enhancing this cooperation in future.

In conclusion, please allow me, to stress that we are facing a totally new reality, which makes us even more determined and convinced on the need to develop new ways towards supporting reforms and ensuring the development of countries in the Eastern neighbourhood that aspire to become fully integrated into the EU.

Moldova's firm choice is a European one and it is directed towards becoming part of the big European family. In this context, I kindly ask for your humble support in our determination to advance on the path of EU membership.

Thank you for your attention and I am ready to answer your questions.