



Plenary sitting

B9-0203/2023

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 Verts/ALE Group

B9-0203/2023

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

The European Parliament,

- having regard to its previous resolutions on Moldova,
 - having regard to the European Council decision of 23 June 2022 granting EU candidate status to the Republic of Moldova,
 - 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,
 - having regard to the joint statement following the Seventh EU-Moldova Association Council of 7 February 2023,
 - having regard to the joint opinion of the Venice Commission and the Directorate General of Human Rights and Rule of Law of the Council of Europe on the draft Law on the external assessment of judges and prosecutors, adopted by the Venice Commission at its 134th Plenary Session on 14 March 2023,
 - having regard to European Council conclusions of 23 March 2023 on the EU's continuing to provide all relevant support to the Republic of Moldova,
 - having regard to Rule 132 of its Rules of Procedure,
- A. whereas the Russian Federation's full scale invasion of Ukraine on 24 February 2022 has affected regional security and stability, as well as the socio-economic situation of its neighbours, in particular the Republic of Moldova; whereas Russia continues its efforts to destabilise the region including Moldova in an attempt to push it off its democratic course;
- B. whereas there have been concerns about potential Russian false flag operations in Moldova since the beginning of Russia's war against Ukraine; whereas Moldovan President Maia Sandu has warned of plans by Russia to topple Moldova's leadership; whereas Moldova's intelligence service reported on 9 February 2023 that Russia was acting to destabilise the country;
- C. whereas on 21 February 2023, Russia revoked a 2012 decree that committed it to respecting Moldova's sovereignty in efforts to resolve the future of the Transnistria region; whereas Russia maintains about 1,600 troops in Transnistria; whereas the Moldovan authorities have arrested several alleged pro-Russian activists as well as an alleged operative of the Wagner private military company who tried to enter the country; whereas Russia has violated Moldovan airspace on several occasions;

¹ OJ L 260, 30.8.2014, p. 4.

- D. whereas Russia continues to exert political and economic pressure on Moldova; whereas in October 2022, Russia cut the flow of natural gas to Moldova by a third; whereas energy prices have soared and inflation has risen to 30 %; whereas Moldova's economic output fell by 5.9 % year-on-year in real terms in 2022; whereas surveys show many people in Moldova see the rising cost of living and unemployment as the main challenges facing the country;
- E. whereas over 750 000 Ukrainian refugees have crossed the border into Moldova since 24 February 2022 and more than 100 000 of them have sought longer-term safety, protection and security in Moldova; whereas over 90 % of refugees are women and children;
- F. whereas several anti-government protests have taken place since September 2022; whereas Moldova's police states that it foiled a plot by groups of Russian-backed actors to cause 'mass disorder' during protests and that pro-Russian forces have abused citizens' vulnerable economic position by providing financial incentives to attend anti-government protests;
- G. whereas the EU has assisted Moldova in finding alternative sources of natural gas to reduce its dependence on Russia and the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development has provided energy bill compensation and credits for the acquisition of strategic gas reserves; whereas on 2 November 2022, for the first time Moldova imported natural gas through physical reverse flow from the Slovakia-Ukraine border, marking a key step towards reducing its dependence on Gazprom; whereas since March 2022 Moldova's electricity grid has been synchronised with the ENTSO-E Continental Europe network;
- H. whereas the Council granted the Republic of Moldova EU candidate status on 23 June 2022 on the understanding that Moldova is to implement nine steps, including justice sector reform, anticorruption and de-oligarchisation measures;
- I. whereas on 23 March 2023, the European Council reaffirmed that the European Union would continue to provide all relevant support to Moldova to strengthen the country's resilience, security, stability and economy and help it on its path to EU accession; whereas the European Council invited the Commission to present a support package ahead of its next meeting;
1. Stands in solidarity with Moldova and reiterates its unwavering support for the sovereignty of the Republic of Moldova and therefore condemns the hybrid aggression by the Russian federation and its proxies seeking to destabilise the country and push it off its democratic course, whether by violating Moldova's airspace, cyberattacks, disinformation campaigns, weaponising energy or orchestrating protests;
 2. Notes the recent wave of anti-government protests in Moldova and while fully supporting citizens' right to freedom of assembly and freedom of speech, condemns financial incentives reportedly provided by pro-Russian actors in exchange for participation in protests as a clear abuse of citizens' vulnerable economic position, which in itself is in large part due to Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine;
 3. Reiterates its support for the Member States' decision to grant EU candidate status to

Moldova, in line with Article 49 of the Treaty on European Union, and as the start of a merit-based process; calls on the Member States to muster the political will to re-energise the enlargement process and to deliver on their promises through concrete and positive steps in the accession processes of countries that seek to join the Union and deserve to be part of the European family;

4. Welcomes the European Council announcement of 23 March 2023 of a support package for Moldova to be delivered by the Commission before the summer; welcomes the direct budget support provided to Moldova, the liberalisation of road transport and the temporary trade liberalisation with the EU for seven agricultural products until June 2024;
5. Welcomes the EU's assistance to Moldova in reforming its energy sector by diversifying its energy sources and decreasing its reliance on Russia; calls on the Commission to work towards improving energy efficiency, attracting investment in renewable energy sources and improving connectivity, while ensuring environmental sustainability and striving towards carbon neutrality in line with Moldova's strategic priorities;
6. Welcomes Moldova's efforts to take the nine steps set out in the 23 June 2022 European Council decision on which its candidate status was based, together with its reforms in the context of the wider Association Agreement/Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Area, including those in relation to democracy, the rule of law and human rights, and encourages it to continue on this path;
7. Expresses support for the deployment of the EU Common Security and Defence Policy Advisory Civilian Mission to Moldova in order to assist the Moldovan justice, police and customs authorities in establishing an effective security sector, as well as in the fight against cyberattacks and disinformation; also welcomes in this context the launch in July 2022 of the EU Support Hub for Internal Security and Border Management in Moldova;
8. Praises Moldova's show of solidarity with, and continuing support to, refugees from Ukraine; calls on the Commission and the Member States to set up specific additional support programmes for refugee women, in particular, in collaboration with the UN, specialised support for victims of gender-based violence and access to sexual and reproductive health services, and to assist Moldova in this regard; also recalls the need for Moldova to uphold its commitments to enhance gender equality and fight violence against women, as noted in the European Council decision granting Moldova EU candidate status;
9. Calls on the actors responsible to avoid the destabilisation of the situation in Transnistria and prevent Russia's war of aggression spreading to the territory of Moldova; calls on the Russian Federation to fully and unconditionally withdraw its military forces and armaments from the Transnistrian region in line with the 1999 Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe Istanbul Summit Decisions and with respect for the Republic of Moldova's sovereignty and territorial integrity;
10. Welcomes Moldova's willingness to align itself with most of the sanctions imposed by the EU on the Russian Federation for its aggression against Ukraine; calls on the

Commission to assist Moldova in implementing these sanctions and to provide support to mitigate any negative consequences;

11. Calls on the Commission to adequately accommodate the support needs stemming from Moldova's new candidate status, including by establishing a dedicated directorate in DG NEAR and ensuring sufficient capacities at the EU Delegation in Chişinău; calls for Moldova to be made eligible for the EU's pre-accession financial instruments as soon as possible, and no later than the start of the next EU multiannual financial cycle; calls on the Commission to reward sustainable progress with a wider phasing-in of Moldova and other candidate countries into relevant EU policies and initiatives, so as to allow citizens to enjoy the benefits of accession throughout the process and not only upon its completion;
12. Calls on the Commission to expand the opportunities for Moldova to participate in and observe the work of the EU institutions as well as to enhance structured political dialogue, including dialogue on the margins of the European Council;
13. Reiterates its call on the Commission to expedite work towards Moldova's integration into the EU single market; invites the Commission to explore measures to suspend import duties on all Moldovan exports to the EU, increasing the quotas for Moldovan agricultural products and facilitating labour-market access for Moldovans in the EU; calls on the Commission to abolish roaming charges between Moldova and the EU;
14. Calls on the Commission to assist Moldova with its efforts on effective de-oligarchisation reforms by providing support to increase the capacities of investigators and prosecutors and to respond to the opinion of the Venice Commission of 14 March 2023;
15. Calls on the Moldovan authorities to persist in their efforts to reform the justice system, in particular as regards the implementation of vetting procedures for judges and the fight against corruption;
16. Emphasises the importance of engaging civil society as part of the reform process and recalls that enhanced involvement of civil society in decision-making processes is stipulated in the European Council decision granting Moldova EU candidate status;
17. Urges the Commission and the Member States to assist Moldova in improving its resilience against possible future Russian hybrid attacks, including in the areas of defence, cybersecurity and strategic communication; calls for the Commission and the Member States to take further measures against foreign interference and disinformation, and to support Moldova in this regard;
18. Urges the Commission and the Member States to continue delivering support to Moldova under the European Peace Facility in order to boost its security and defence capabilities; calls on the Commission and the Member States to consider options for assisting Moldova with air surveillance equipment;
19. Looks forward to the next summit of the European Political Community to be held in Moldova in June 2023;

20. 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 EEAS, the governments and parliaments of the Member States, and to the President, Government and Parliament of the Republic of Moldova.