

JOINT STATEMENT

by the Ministers of Foreign Affairs of Georgia, the Republic of Moldova and Ukraine on the Future of Eastern Partnership

(5 December 2019, Bratislava)

We, the Ministers of Foreign Affairs of Georgia, the Republic of Moldova and Ukraine,

- having regard to European aspirations and European choice, as stated in the Association Agreements, and European identity of our nations,
- taking into account the close historical relationship and progressively closer links between the European Union, its Member States and Partner countries, as well as their desire to strengthen and widen relations in an ambitious and innovative way,
- stressing the sovereign right of our nations to determine our own future, and
- bearing in mind the political association with the EU established through the Association Agreements aimed at advancing integration with the EU in an ambitious, comprehensive and dynamic way,
- having regard to the 10th anniversary of the Eastern Partnership (EaP),

Welcome the achievements of the EaP policy within the last ten years, namely: entry into force and successful application of the EU Association Agreements, including Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Areas (DCFTAs); establishment of the visa-free regimes; progress in implementation of *20 Deliverables to 2020*; extension of the core TEN-T networks to the Eastern Partnership countries, accession to the Energy Community, opening of EU Agencies and Programmes for Partners' participation, extending people-to-people contacts.

Recall that the Eastern Partnership is a tool for positive transformation of the Partner countries in order to insure peace and prosperity in the whole Europe.

Stress that the principles of differentiation, including the “more for more” approach, has been key to the success of EaP giving the Partnership a framework within which each Partner can engage with the EU in accordance with its own capabilities, ambitions and interests. This principle is a guarantee of the functionality, relevance and effectiveness of the policy for all the Partners.

Support the principle of inclusiveness as a guarantee that all six Partners remain engaged with the EU leaving open the future opportunities for each Partner if they wish to engage more. It is in the interest of all the Eastern Partners to further develop multilateral cooperation among the six and the EU, from which all parties benefit to the same extent.

Stress our determination to cooperate closely on European integration, share our best practices in the implementation of the Association Agreements; call the EU on further liberalisation of the EU trade with the relevant Associated countries by reviewing of the DCFTA provisions; call upon the EU/incoming European Commission to engage further in joint discussions on the progress, opportunities and challenges concerning the association-related reforms with the aim of facilitating full implementation of the AA/DCFTAs; invite the EU to consider establishing the EU+ Three Associated Partners dialogue in the areas including, but not limited to, transport, energy, justice and digital economy.

Note the substantial progress made by each individual country in its reform process and **confirm** our commitment to exploit fully the potential of the Association Agreements for further progressive development of our relations with the EU.

Reiterate our readiness to expand the scope of our cooperation with the EU aiming at a more sector-specific integration; in particular in the area of energy, transport, digital economy, customs cooperation, trade facilitation and justice and home affairs; to increase interconnectivity between the Associated countries and the EU aimed at exploiting the connectivity potential of the Black Sea, which will further boost regional and international trade and transportation.

Welcome the intention of the European Commission to accelerate the implementation of the Association Agreements and Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade with Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine as well as to deepen sectoral cooperation; recall that the EaP Associated Partners have undertaken, through respective Association Agreements and DCFTAs, a commitment to achieve an advanced level of legal and economic convergence with the EU, addressing challenges specific to this region. The objectives of the Association Agreements require an upgraded and a more tailored funding response from both sides of the Agreements and necessitate a specific EU financial instrument to support them.

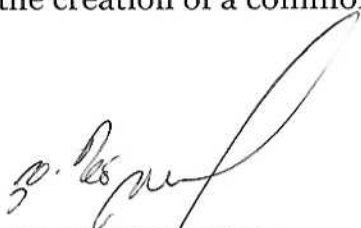
Declare that, as the European States respecting the founding values of the European Union, upon implementation of the Association Agreements and taking into consideration the will of our people, we will consider applying for the EU membership in accordance with the article 49 of the Treaty on European Union.

Underline that our people have freely chosen European integration and their choice must be fully respected and be free from pressure by any third country;

Reiterate our strong condemnation of the clear violation of the territorial integrity of the sovereign states within the internationally recognized borders. We call upon the EU to play a more visible role and further increase its engagement in peaceful conflict resolution in the EaP area, inter alia, by strengthening the EU presence in conflict-affected countries. We call upon the EU to intensify its efforts to encourage withdrawal of all foreign troops and military assets illegally deployed on the territories of our States.

Emphasize that, based on the strategic vision that helped shape the first ten years of the EaP, the next EaP summit in 2020 should define a long-term, strategic, forward-looking agenda with political objectives and new benchmarks for the Partnership that will open the way for building ever closer relations between the EU and Eastern European Partners and bring stability, security and prosperity to the entire region of Eastern Europe.

Declare that a next ambitious but viable target for our countries should be a gradual integration aimed at achieving full access to the EU single market, while setting future European benchmarks. We believe that new horizons should be opened in implementing the four freedoms between EU and three Associated Partners, which will also lay ground to the creation of a common economic space.



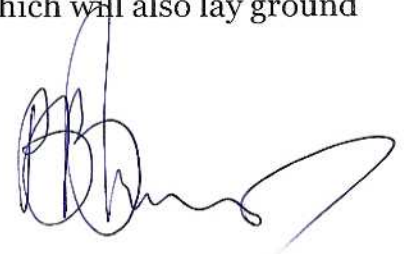
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