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Check against delivery

Debate on cooperation activities of the Congress

27 October 2022

**Mr. President, Mr. Secretary General,
Distinguished guests,**

I am honoured to be here today and to represent the Government of my country.

31 years ago, the people of the Republic of Moldova, like the people of Georgia and Ukraine, decided to embark upon the transformative journey of becoming an independent democracy, based on the firm commitment to build a society that is just, well-governed and inclusive.

As on the entire European continent, the year 2022 brought about a turning point in the history of the Republic of Moldova. After more than three decades of independence, we took a new, decisive step towards anchoring our country in the free world, by applying to join the European Union as a full member.

We stand firmly in solidarity with our Ukrainian friends and neighbours, who were unjustly attacked simply for wishing to follow their own path towards freedom and prosperity. It is our profound belief that our place is - and has always been - together with countries and peoples embracing the core values which also lie at the heart of the Council of Europe - human rights, democracy and the rule of law.

Of course, these are difficult times. We are confronted with the risk of being cut off from energy supplies, while also battling rising inflation - a vortex of crises against the backdrop of a socio-economic situation which had already been difficult in the wake of the pandemic.

While it is customary to say that in every crisis lies a chance, it would be cynical to say this as bombs keep falling on Ukraine. However, the war did underline the urgent need to strengthen our resilience - and thus to double down on our commitments to transform our country into a modern European state. While dedicating a lot of resources to the mitigation of the manifold effects of the regional situation, we are continuing on the path of structural reforms, aimed at enhancing the quality of governance and public administration, consolidating the independence of our judiciary, reducing regional disparities, ensuring economic resilience and protecting the most vulnerable groups in society.

Cooperation, development and cohesion are key for the future of Moldova. And what I want to mention first of all is that after eight months of war in Ukraine, the local communities in my country are continuing to help refugees from the neighbouring country and to open not only the doors of their homes, but their hearts also.

The involvement and contribution of local authorities was enormous. The Government has always valued this mobilisation and collaboration of local communities.

We appreciate that the Council of Europe Action Plan for the Republic of Moldova 2021-2024 provides the framework for continued cooperation of the Council's assistance programs, including in the area of local democracy.

Regarding developments in implementing international commitments and the corresponding policy framework, in order to reform and streamline public administration, the Public Administration Reform Strategy (PARS) concept was developed, which provides an integrated and synergetic approach to the two components of the reform (central and local government). The adoption thereof (by December 2022) is also a benchmark in the roadmap proposed by the European Commission in the context of the Republic of Moldova becoming an EU candidate country.

The key areas of the PARS will focus on public service management, public organisations/agencies, strategic planning and the public policy-making system, digitisation of public services and de-bureaucratisation, and local public administration. These areas were identified in the context of a public administration assessment carried out this year.

The Government of the Republic of Moldova aims to restructure the public administration system (both at the central and local levels) in order to enhance its efficiency and its capacity to quickly and flexibly respond to the challenges and problems in a changing world. We believe that the efficiency of the public administration system can be achieved only through direct cooperation and dialogue with all relevant stakeholders, including local level actors and their representative associations.

As we all know, one of the most important lessons of the pandemic is related to the imperative of accelerating the digital transformation process. Therefore,, the Government of the Republic of Moldova approved a Concept of Local Public Administration Portal of the Republic of Moldova (e-LPA). The portal will integrate existing public services, such as e-signature and e-payments, facilitating the provision of public services online by LPAs and digital interaction with citizens and businesses. To put it simply, the guiding principle of our policy on digital transformation is digital-first.

In the context of implementing **activities related to the LPA reform**, the reference document is the **Roadmap for Local and Regional Democracy in the Republic of Moldova**,

The Government is in the process of developing a new strategy for public administration reform, including LPAs. In order to strengthen the communication and consultation platform for the territorial-administrative reform, after a hiatus of more than 5 years, we re-activated the Joint Commission for Decentralisation.

We expect the Joint Commission will identify the necessary consensus to advance policy options in a timely manner, develop communication and dialogue between the central public administration and local public administrations, and agree and commit to strengthening local autonomy and decentralisation.

At the first meeting of the Joint Commission, to be held within two weeks, we will discuss options for territorial administrative reforms and will form sectoral joint working groups by policy area - local public finance, local infrastructure and assets, education, health, social protection- which will be entrusted to identify key issues in terms of strengthening local autonomy and submitting proposals/decisions to the Joint Commission on improving the legal framework and public policy proposals.

On improving the management capacity of local authorities: Compared to recent years, the number of places allocated for the training of local civil servants has doubled, reaching 750 places in 2022, for the first time in recent years. We propose to increase this figure next year as well.

I would also like to mention that the Government has launched the flagship European Village Programme, which supports infrastructure projects for localities. 724 infrastructure projects have been submitted so far (their total value is 2,800 billion lei), covering the entire territory of Moldova, including the Gagauz region and Chisinau, for the first phase of support 492 have been approved.

We are convinced that public administration reform efforts will contribute to developing the administrative capacity of public bodies and institutions (including at the local level), making the wage system more attractive, recruiting civil servants based exclusively on merit, and addressing the evil of corruption at all levels.

As I conclude my speech, I would like to avail myself of this opportunity to express my gratitude, on behalf of the Government of the Republic of Moldova, to the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of the Council of Europe for the constant support provided to strengthening our democracy, good governance, local autonomy, as well as for the expertise provided in formulating and implementing decentralisation policies. Over the past year, we have been striving to empower our communities, while also streamlining the central administration. Our commitment towards upholding the norms and values of the European Charter of Local Self-Government remains ironclad.

The Republic of Moldova has continuously made progress on the path of administrative reform. The Government's activity is oriented towards strengthening institutions, reducing red tape, enhancing human resources and improving the interaction between the state on the one hand and citizens and companies on the other hand.

As for the recommendations of the Congress, they are being gradually implemented.

We count on the support of the Council of Europe and especially the Congress in implementing further reforms in the area of strengthening democracy, good governance, and local autonomy with a view towards moving to a new stage of the post-monitoring dialogue.

Thank you for your attention!