

Panel: Eastern Partnership after Warsaw Summit

From the outset, I would like to thank the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Latvia, the Government of Canada and the Jean Monnet Excellence Centre at the University of Latvia for organizing this event. It is a great pleasure to participate today in this Roundtable. Also, it is symbolic that Canada together with the European Union is interested in exploring all venues in view of developing relations with the Eastern Partnership countries.

Almost two years have past from the launch in September 2010 of the informal group of states and international financial institutions, called Group of Friends of Eastern Partnership and Canada is one of the members of this group. We attach particular importance to the further development of this format of cooperation by supporting individually technically or financially the partner countries in the implementation of some of the Eastern Partnership projects.

The Eastern Partnership, as the eastern dimension of the European Neighbourhood Policy, has proved to be a valuable instrument to enhance relations between the EU and partners. We clearly see more engagement between the EU and Eastern Partners, if we are to compare with the Warsaw Summit of September last year. Our position in respect of the future vision of the EaP has not changed: we perceive Eastern Partnership as a platform to prepare for future membership talks.

Today's roundtable provides a timely opportunity to have an exchange of views on the latest achievements, challenges and, maybe, on the next steps to be taken.

Republic of Moldova is exploring all the opportunities offered by the Eastern Partnership, both on the bilateral and multilateral dimensions, in order of getting gradually closer to the EU. Moldova declared clearly its political support for the Eastern Partnership and has proved its readiness to use all its opportunities aiming to facilitate the process of rapprochement with the EU. At the same time, we do not see the Eastern Partnership as an alternative to EU membership but rather as a tool to bring us closer to the achievement of the final aim when the necessary criteria are fulfilled.

The principle of differentiation based on the individual merits of each partner country enhanced by the more for more principle should represent the driven forces both for opening new opportunities for an ever-increased bilateral cooperation with the EU and for new jointly agreed deliverables rewarding a positive track-record registered in the EaP's bilateral and multilateral dimensions.

The new stage of our cooperation on the bilateral dimension, as provided by the EaP, is principally related to the Association Agreement with European Union. The Association Agreement, under negotiations, will provide for a political association and economic integration. The economic integration will be achieved by establishing a deep and comprehensive free trade area with the EU (DCFTA). The conclusion and implementation of the Association Agreement will result with more engagement in the EU-Moldova relations, and will deliver a path of modernization for our country.

Also, an Association Agreement, with a DCFTA as an integral part, will further strengthen the current position of the Republic of Moldova and is going to be an important step of integration in the Internal Market of the EU.

We do hope to maintain the current positive dynamic in the dialogue with the EU in the negotiations on DCFTA launched in December 2011. We have a positive experience as a beneficiary of the EU Autonomous Trade Preferences and member of CEFTA.

Given these developments, we think that it is important to upgrade the level of sector cooperation by convening periodic bilateral meetings at ministerial level between the EU and partner countries aiming to ensure the necessary political guidance and coordination.

Mobility is another area: it would be difficult to ignore the insistence of all our countries on this point. We hope that Moldova's efforts in reforming its Justice and Home Affairs sector would be appreciated by advancing our Visa Dialogue to the second phase of implementation of the Action Plan during this year, taking into account the Government's performance in implementing agreed reforms.

The liberalization of the visa regime will certainly favour more people-to-people contacts and boost the business related opportunities. We believe that once achieved these actions will create favorable preconditions for the citizens of Moldova to feel, in the nearest future, the first benefits of European integration.

The future shape of our dialogue with European Union cannot take place under some other parameters than the enlargement policy. These two elements, the prospect of membership, on one side, and the hard work and determination to move towards EU standards and values, on the other side, have helped us to consolidate our young democracy, to reinforce the rule of law and respect for fundamental rights, to promote market economy.

Alongside the constructive dialogue with the European institutions, Moldova is building very good bilateral dialogue with the EU Member States. We know how important the support of the EU Member States is for our undertakings.

We together with member states have succeeded in resetting the EU-Moldova political dialogue. We highly appreciate the openness and trust, which are the pillars of the new formats of political dialogue "The European Action Group for Moldova", Visegrad countries plus Baltic states plus Eastern Partnership States, and EU- Moldova Forum.

Bearing in mind the aim of elaborating the EaP Road Map following the 2nd EaP Summit Declaration, I would like to mention that we are participating actively in the ongoing discussions on the development of the Road Map on the implementation of the agreed objectives, instruments, actions and guidelines for their implementation. Also, as it is mentioned in the *Proposals regarding the EaP Road Map* submitted by Czech Republic, Germany, Poland, Sweden in January this year, we would like to start the negotiations and to adopt an ambitious EU Moldova Associations agenda for the period until the next Summit in 2013 EaP.