

Statement by H.E. Maia Sandu, President of the Republic of Moldova, delivered at the General Debate of the 77th Session of the United Nations' General Assembly High-Level Week

21 September 2022

Mr. President,

Mr. Secretary-General,

Your excellences,

I am standing before you today proudly representing the Republic of Moldova, a future member of the European Union.

I am grateful for the unanimous support that we received from the 27 EU member states. Thank you for your recognition and vote of trust in our love for freedom, dynamic democracy, and commitment to the rule of law.

A successful peace project, the European Union – through cooperation and integration – was forged to stop the cycle of wars that tormented our continent for centuries. This is another watershed moment in our history, and the EU has to do it again.

By applying to join the European Union, we want the world to know: we choose democracy over autocracy, liberty over oppression, peace over war, and prosperity over poverty.

The EU candidate status gives us hope, a clear sense of direction, a unifying goal, an anchor, and a strong sense of belonging. Belonging to the free world.

Ladies and gentlemen,

One year ago, none of us here would have imagined a major war in Europe.

Russia's unprovoked war against another sovereign state, Ukraine, has shaken the world to the core, has put to test the fundamental principles of the UN, has shattered global security, triggered a European energy crisis, global food shortages, and an economic downturn.

Seven months of bombings have killed thousands of innocent people and pushed millions of Ukrainians to flee their homes.

This war is not just an attack on our neighbour and friend, Ukraine. It is an attack on the rules-based international order. It is an attack on nuclear safety.

It is an attack on food supplies to countries in the Middle East and Africa.

It's an attack on this very institution where we find ourselves in today. We firmly condemn the war against Ukraine, as well as the recently announced additional mobilization of troops by Russia.

We firmly stand with Ukraine and support its independence, sovereignty, and territorial integrity within its internationally recognized borders.

I would like to express my utmost admiration to all Ukrainians for their courage, their resilience, and their inner power to continue this fight for survival, justice, and freedom.

It is our moral duty, as an international community, to continue supporting Ukraine. Ukraine is fighting today to keep all of us safe, to keep Europe safe. It needs our back and support. Europe, all of us, we must help Ukraine.

As I stand at this tribune I represent a country that wants peace. I represent the citizens of Moldova who, irrespective of the language that we speak - Romanian, Ukrainian, Russian, Gagauz, or Bulgarian-, regardless of our ethnicity, or political preferences, whether we

live on the right bank of river Nistru, or in the breakaway region of Transnistria, we all want peace!

A country of less than 3 million people, we have sheltered more than half a million refugees fleeing the war. At the peak of the inflow, our population grew by 4 percent. Some 80,000 refugees chose to stay among us.

I use this opportunity to pay tribute from this high rostrum to all Moldovan families who showed unprecedented solidarity with refugees by opening their homes and hearts to those in need. I am proud of my people.

I am also grateful to the international partners, including the United Nations, who have provided assistance in managing the humanitarian crisis.

I also thank the UN Secretary-General and other high-level officials who visited our country in our hour of need, to show support and solidarity.

My deep gratitude goes to France, Germany, Romania and other partners for setting up the Moldova Support Platform that stands by our country in these difficult times.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Moldova knows what it is to be a country divided by conflict. In 1992 we faced a brief but tragic war in the Transnistrian region of our country.

Three decades later, we are still trying to overcome the consequences of that conflict, and reintegrate our country. The only way to achieve this is through peaceful dialogue and respect for our sovereignty and territorial integrity.

As Russia has launched its war against Ukraine, we have worked harder than ever to maintain peace on both banks of river Nistru.

We have done our best to ensure that all citizens of Moldova, including those residing in the breakaway region, continue to enjoy peace.

The illegal presence of the Russian military troops in the Transnistrian region infringes our neutrality and increases the security risks for our country.

We call on the **complete and unconditional withdrawal of Russian troops**. We call on the destruction of ammunition from the Cobasna stockpiles, which pose a security and environmental threat to the region as a whole.

As we strive to maintain peace, our economy and society are bearing the brunt of Russia's war against Ukraine. Our resources are strained, investments have slowed down, trade and transport routes are disrupted, inflation is nearing 35 percent.

In addition, we are facing a wide spectrum of hybrid threats, from disinformation and propaganda to cyber-attacks and energy pressures.

The abnormally high prices for natural gas and Russia's attempts to weaponize gas and oil supplies to Europe have triggered an unprecedented energy crisis. We are one of the most vulnerable countries in the face of this crisis.

But this only makes us more determined to diversify our energy sources and decrease dependence on fossil fuels. We plan to increase the share of renewable electricity supplies from 3 to 30 percent in the next 3 years. This will make our country stronger, and our environment healthier and safer.

Distinguished audience,

We all know that the only way to save the planet is joint global action against climate change. The same goes for the fight against corruption.

Corruption weakens states and erodes democracies. We should take it more seriously than ever before. We need clear international mechanisms to stop the flow of dirty money. We need better instruments for asset recovery and restitution.

We need better information exchanges between law enforcement and anti-fraud authorities in different countries. And we need to set up international sanction regimes against corruption.

Ladies and gentlemen,

Despite all challenges, **Moldova is pressing ahead with our reform agenda. We are building a stronger, and more democratic state.** Last year, Moldova improved 49 positions in the Press Freedom Index, ranking 40th in the world. Justice reform and the fight against corruption is at the core of our transformation.

We are working hard to become a better place for investors – to create jobs, boost the economy and bring greater prosperity to our people.

We are investing in connectivity with Europe and we are trying to bring our country closer to European standards.

We are building roads and bridges, hospitals and a more modern education system. We are building stronger institutions that will benefit the citizens of Moldova.

We are focused, persistent and relentless. We are determined to bring Moldova into the EU so that every Moldovan can have better living standards and more economic opportunities, at home.

This is the only way for Moldova to grow as a consolidated democracy in our part of the world, during these difficult times.

Ladies and gentlemen,

As I come before you from a region weakened by war, an energy crisis, drought and rampant inflation, my message is this: in the face of man-made human suffering and economic adversity, the countries of the world must stand together once again.

We must do so to reaffirm the value of peace and the inviolability of human life, to defend democracy and freedom, and to uphold the right of every country to decide their own fate.

Thank you.