

Mr. President,

Mr. Secretary-General,

Your excellencies,

It is with great pride that I once more stand before you, at the General Assembly of the United Nations, to represent the Republic of Moldova – a country on the frontline of the fight for democracy.

Today, Moldova stands stronger and more resilient than a year ago. We stand firm in our belief in a democratic future – and we stand firm with Ukraine as our neighbour continues to resist Russia’s brutal invasion – an attack on its sovereignty and way of life.

We stand firmly for Ukraine’s victory, because when Ukraine wins, the free world wins. Now, more than ever, support for Ukraine must not diminish. Please, continue supporting Ukraine.

**Ladies and gentlemen,**

Ukraine, Moldova, Europe and the free world, are facing an external assault on our values. But countries like mine haven't broken free from imperial chains only to be brought back into servitude. We push forward.

We are not facing an imminent military threat, unlike our Ukrainian friends and neighbours, but every day we are countering Russia's hybrid assault.

Russia has teamed up with corrupt crooks to destabilise us. Their hybrid toolbox includes energy blackmail, support for separatism, sponsoring mass anti-government protests, cyber attacks and disinformation campaigns. They also tried to overthrow our democratically elected government. But each time, they have failed.

We know they will try again. In soon to be held elections, they will attempt to undermine our citizens' ability to make their own, democratic choices.

This threat is not unique to us. Many countries, in Europe and beyond our continent, are feeling the sting of foreign interference in their democratic processes. This hybrid assault is conducted by those who oppose not just our democracy but all liberal democracies.

We must stay vigilant. And we must stand united.

**Distinguished audience,**

Against all odds, we preserved peace across all of Moldova, including in the breakaway Transnistrian region, where Russian troops are stationed illegally and where concerns about human rights violations are deeply worrying. Our commitment to a peaceful resolution remains steadfast. And I call here today for the unconditional withdrawal of those Russian forces.

In light of intertwined challenges, building Moldova's resilience has not been an easy task. Yet, we take heart in the fact that Moldova is not alone: our friends and partners – the entire free world – stand with us.

Building resilience means that Moldova has moved from relying solely on Russian gas to having a mix of energy sources and backup storage. We are also building electricity lines to Europe, investing in energy efficiency and pursuing renewable sources.

The true measure of a democracy's success rests on its ability to deliver a better life and real economic benefits to citizens.

Strengthening our economy as the war rages across the border is a daunting challenge. But we are determined.

Small and medium-sized enterprises can now access funds to grow; digital public services are helping to cut red-tape; the EU market is open to exports of our fruit and vegetables. Inflation is down to 10% from a peak of 35% last October. A major ratings agency has upgraded our outlook to stable.

We are comprehensively reforming the justice system, redoubling our efforts to defeat corruption and organised crime. Part of this effort is reducing the malign influence of fugitive oligarchs who at one time captured our state.

I am grateful to many of you in this room for imposing sanctions on those individuals. The next crucial step in this journey is to ensure that the stolen money is returned to the Moldovan people.

As evidence of our commitment, on corruption perception, as measured by Transparency International, we improved by 24 places in the past two years, our best score in a decade. On the Rule of Law Index, part of the World Justice Project, we have advanced by 14 places since 2020.

Greater resilience will also come through enhanced transport links with Europe – vitally important given Russia’s blockade of Ukrainian ports and the disruption of trade routes.

We are upgrading roads and railways and this modernised infrastructure will not only boost our trade and create jobs, but also support Solidarity Lanes for Ukraine, ensuring that its grain reaches the regions where it's needed most. And one day, these very connections will be aiding Ukraine's post-war reconstruction.

As we build up defences and resilience, Moldova is increasingly recognised as a contributor to regional security: a strong neighbour to Ukraine and partner to the EU in countering security challenges.

But our commitment extends globally: Moldovan servicemen actively contribute to peacekeeping missions, including, most recently, in the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon.

Underscoring our commitment to the security of our continent, we hosted the European Political Community summit last June – a summit that further cemented our place in the European family.

**Ladies and gentlemen,**

Economic progress, improving security and reinforcing our democracy are part of our journey towards membership of the European Union. Moldova's European aspirations have long been well known. Last May, one hundred thousand Moldovans rallied in Chişinău to reassert their commitment to democracy – and to EU membership.

Let me be clear: Moldova's EU membership is not just a political choice, it is the only way to protect our liberty, peace and democracy.

The enlargement of the EU is the sole path to ensure our neighbourhood stays anchored in the free world and that we deliver better lives for our citizens. It will also demonstrate the union's commitment to peace – the very reason the EU was built.

When it comes to membership, we believe in a fair and merit-driven process and have been doing our homework diligently.

With this in mind, I call on the European Commission and all EU members to support us.

I also extend this call, beyond the EU borders, to all the countries of the free world, especially those with well-established, robust democracies, who have long reaped its benefits and understand its worth.

The success or downfall of one democracy resonates globally.

When one thrives, it inspires hope in others; when one falters, it risks a domino effect. Today, the fight for democracy anywhere is a fight for democracy everywhere.

And in this inter-linked fight for democracy, *we will prevail.*

Thank you.