

Mr. President,
Mr. Secretary-General,
Excellencies,

It is an honour to represent my country, the Republic of Moldova, at this unique forum where small and large nations alike address core issues on the global agenda. Climate change, poverty, and the global cost-of-living crisis are our generational challenges. So is peace and security.

For some time now, it seemed we were living in a rules-based international system, which strongly discouraged geopolitical conquests, spheres of influence and disregard for the aspirations of smaller nations. The world proved to be a much safer place when smaller

nations have a say and the choices their people make are respected.

Peace, security, prosperity and free choice is the core agenda for Moldova today. Generations of our intellectuals, writers and civic activists have fought for our independence and for the freedom to pursue our identity and values. They have succeeded in making Moldova free! After 33 years of independence, we see it in the confidence of our youth, in the revitalization of our culture, and in the way our people stand proud on the international stage, knowing their future lies in their own hands.

Very next to us, Russia's unprovoked and unjust war of aggression against Ukraine

threatens the fabric of our international order. It throws us back to the times of great power politics, when a large state pursues cynical geopolitical designs to divide the region into spheres of influence and annex smaller neighbours, denying them a say in their own destiny.

For Moldova, this is not a mere distant memory - it is a looming threat. Moldova knows all too well the consequences, and we are determined to never return to those times. Don't forget: Kremlin doesn't want us at the table. Kremlin wants us on the table. Never mind all the excuses and the circumstances. Compulsion and raw force are perpetuated and complemented now with hybrid warfare, malign

influence and subversion of the democratic state. These latest developments, Ladies and Gentlemen, are threatening not only Moldova. We see them escalating throughout the democratic world. Even mature democracies find it difficult to cope with, witnessing polarisation and division.

Therefore, Ukraine is now fighting not just for its statehood, nation, and its very existence. It is fighting for each nation's freedom to choose and pursue its own national aspirations. Moldova stands by and in solidarity with Ukraine in defence against Kremlin's aggression. And we urge the international community to timely provide all necessary support to Ukraine.

Distinguished audience,

Despite the war at our border, Moldova remains an active and committed contributor to regional security. We are a reliable partner for our neighbours, Romania and Ukraine, as well as the European Union. We have preserved peace and security in Moldova. At the same time, we have supported humanitarian efforts by welcoming over 1 million Ukrainian refugees and ensuring their safety. Peace is not just our goal; it is our duty. Peace remains our core commitment.

Moldova is also committed to a just, peaceful resolution of the Transnistrian conflict, with full respect for Moldova's sovereignty

and territorial integrity within its internationally recognized borders. For this to happen, Russia's illegal military presence must end. I call on the international community to reaffirm the need for the immediate and unconditional withdrawal of the Russian military from Moldova. This is not just about Moldova; it is about upholding international law, safeguarding regional stability, and ensuring that no country's sovereignty is compromised by foreign military presence.

Ladies and gentlemen,

Moldova's destiny belongs to Moldovans, not outside powers. Kremlin's efforts to suppress the dignity and will of the people of Moldova, through both internal

subversion and external intimidation, have no place in the 21st century.

Despite our differences, we have always taken big decisions as a nation, together, and have proudly reaffirmed our national dignity and self-worth! The social compact of our society is individual freedoms, human rights, competitive elections, and open society, not Kremlin's satellite state.

Today our people are closer than ever to fulfilling these aspirations! We are full of hope and determination. Hope for a democratic, prosperous future in the European family of nations, to which we rightfully belong; and this hope is firmly rooted in Moldova's

collective achievements over the past years. Determined to work hard and tirelessly to become a proud member of the EU's peaceful and prosperous family.

Moldova stands today stronger and more united. Despite flooding Moldova with illicit money, propaganda and falsehoods, and waging a fully-fledged hybrid attack, Kremlin has failed to divide our house against itself.

Moldova is no longer a "grey zone", a profitable money laundering enterprise for unscrupulous oligarchs and foreign powers, who plundered the state and the people and manipulated institutions for their benefit. International sanctions against these perpetrators helped,

and we are working to return the stolen money.

Our commitment to reform is unwavering, and we have made progress in cleaning up its justice system and law-enforcement. The international community has recognized these efforts, with Moldova's corruption perception and rule of law rankings improving significantly.

We acted to make our economy resilient, even in the face of regional instability. Despite proximity to the war zone, Moldova's business environment is improving, though slowly. Small and medium enterprises have a more promising outlook, and exports of high-quality products are picking up thanks to

our access to European markets. Moldova is going digital and is bringing the government closer to its citizens and businesses.

Over the past few years, more has been invested in infrastructure than over 10 years before that. Our energy independence is now a reality. Energy can no longer be used to blackmail and extract geopolitical concessions. Moldova's energy security is ensured by its integration in the regional and international grids and markets. We proceeded to a fast-paced agenda of renewables and energy efficiency.

Resilience is not just about security—it is about our institutions, which are stronger today than ever before,

thanks to the support received from our partners. Institutions are better prepared to safeguard the choices of the Moldovan people from external interference.

Crucially, Moldova has genuinely opened itself to the world. In recognition of the country's progress, in December of 2023, EU leaders unanimously agreed to open accession negotiations with Moldova. This is our most significant achievement since independence, and we are committed to be ready to join the EU by 2030.

Our European path is a matter of vital national interest and our strongest guarantee of peace, democracy and development. On

October 20th, Moldova will reaffirm its European choice in a referendum to enshrine EU integration into our constitution.

Russia may continue its attempts to disrupt Moldova's path through threats, disinformation and destabilisation to change the sovereign choice of the Moldovan people. They want to keep Moldova captive in its past. But we, the Moldovan people, are united in determination. Only we can choose our future. We will not return the country to oligarchs, who plunder the state and want to once again turn the country into their personal fiefdom, which yields massive wealth to a few but fails the majority.

We will not return to a past dominated by oligarchs and corruption. We will not be dragged back into a sphere of influence that does not reflect our aspirations. The people of Moldova choose freedom. We choose Europe. And next month we will reaffirm the goal of our generation - fully-fledged membership in the EU, a union which has supported Moldova throughout our independence.

And now a word on climate change.

Moldova has long been known for a temperate, welcoming climate and agricultural fertility. But just over the past year, we have faced the most severe weather extremes in our history: devastating snowfalls, unprecedented droughts and

heatwaves, and severe floods. They cause massive damages and disruptions, like never before in our history. These challenges are not hypothetical - they are here, and they threaten the livelihoods of our farmers, economy, the infrastructure of our villages and towns, and the future of our children. Climate change risks destroying many things we heavily rely on throughout the planet.

In this context, we welcome the adoption of the Pact for the Future by the United Nations General Assembly. This is a significant step towards building a more effective, inclusive, and sustainable global order. It reaffirms our collective responsibility to future generations. We are committed to working

alongside the international community to turn these pledges into concrete actions that will shape a better, more resilient world.

As a final remark:

Moldova stands at a historic crossroads, both as a nation and as a member of the international community. Moldovan people will not allow it to be stripped of its agency. Moldova chooses peace, democracy, freedom and rule of law, over war, authoritarianism, and repression. For us this means Europe. It is our choice, and it strengthens our resolve to move more decisively towards the EU - a peace and prosperity project - while rejecting war, aggression, and any assault on human dignity.

Thank you!