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Joint Statement on the U.S.-Moldova Strategic Dialogue

MEDIA NOTE

OFFICE OF THE SPOKESPERSON

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The text of the following statement was released by the Governments of the United States of America and Moldova.

Begin Text:

On March 15, 2023, the Governments of the United States of America (United States) and the Republic of Moldova (Moldova) held the Moldova-U.S. Strategic Dialogue in Chisinau. The event included political consultations led by the Moldovan Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Foreign Affairs and European Integration Nicu Popescu and U.S. Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for European and Eurasian Affairs Dereck Hogan.

The United States and Moldova welcomed the significant progress achieved on bilateral priorities since the last Strategic Dialogue in Washington in April 2022. They noted developments in various areas of cooperation, including justice sector and anti-corruption reforms, human rights, promoting a pluralistic media environment and rights-respecting media policies to counter disinformation, energy diversification and resilience, defense modernization and transformation, civil protection, border management, cyber security, countering cross-border threats, combating illicit trafficking in weapons and ammunition, countering proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and related materials, humanely addressing the needs of refugees, and expanding people-to-people ties. The dialogue also underscored the significance of President Sandu's meeting with President Biden in Warsaw in February 2023 and visit to Washington, D.C., in December 2022, in deepening and strengthening bilateral cooperation.

The United States and Moldova have built a strategic partnership and close ties for over 30 years. That partnership has grown even deeper as Moldova manages the repercussions of the Russian Federation's war of aggression against Ukraine. The United States stands together with Moldova by supporting its long-term democratic and economic reform efforts, as well as its sovereignty and territorial integrity. The two countries addressed the economic, energy, security, defense, and humanitarian impacts to Moldova of Russia's war against Ukraine. Since Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine, the United States has made available nearly \$320 million in new economic, security, and humanitarian assistance to help Moldova manage these impacts of the war while maintaining progress on its democratic and anti-corruption reform agenda and promoting economic growth. This assistance includes \$30 million in non-reimbursable budget support disbursed in December 2022 for electricity purchases. The United States, working with Congress, also plans to make available an additional \$300 million for energy assistance in Moldova to address the urgent needs created by Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine and to strengthen Moldova's energy resilience and security, including another \$80 million in budget support to address energy and power costs.

The United States welcomed the European Council decision of June 23, 2022, to grant EU candidate status to the Republic of Moldova. The United States is supporting Moldova's integration with the European Union and the implementation of an ambitious reform agenda essential for the advancement towards this objective and for the benefit of the people of Moldova.

The delegations focused their discussions on enhancing cooperation on a broad range of topics. The participants emphasized the importance of increasing the integrity of justice sector actors and strengthening good governance in Moldova. The United States welcomed the outcome of the first stage of pre-vetting 28 judges for positions in the Superior Council of Magistracy and Moldova's efforts to institute a legal framework for the external assessment of judges and prosecutors (vetting), as well as the adoption of reforms to the electoral code intended to increase transparency with regard to political party financing. Moldova reaffirmed its commitment to tackling corruption, including criminal asset recovery. Moldova expressed appreciation for the United States' continued support to these efforts, as well as the U.S. Department of Treasury's October 2022 sanctions designations against individuals and entities involved in systemic corruption and Russia's malign influence operations in Moldova. The sanctions also designated Russian FSB-affiliated operatives and institutions for interference in Moldova's elections. The United States pledged continued partnership to strengthen Moldova's anti-corruption institutions, including the National Anti-Corruption Center and Anti-Corruption Prosecutor's Office.

The United States welcomed several advances in the field of human rights, including adopted amendments to strengthen the Ombudsman Office and the Anti-Discrimination Council, adoption of legislation on combating hate crimes, adoption of unannounced labor inspections to detect and prevent trafficking in persons, advancement in implementation of the Action Plan on Promoting Holocaust Remembrance and a culture of tolerance, and continued efforts to implement the Istanbul Convention. The United States thanked Moldova for opening its doors to refugees fleeing Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine, and for the

adoption of temporary protection status. U.S. assistance to refugees in Moldova and to Moldovans who have hosted them has totaled nearly \$75 million since the war started. On the media sector, the United States discussed continued assistance to Moldova's Audiovisual Council to enable it to carry out its important responsibilities, while Moldova committed to continuing to pursue a reliable system for television ratings in Moldova – an important tool to ensure fair competition in the audiovisual field.

The United States and Moldova highlighted ongoing cooperation to strengthen Moldova's border security and address cross-border and hybrid threats that have increased due to Russia's full-scale invasion of neighboring Ukraine. The United States discussed continued support to Moldova for reforming and consolidating its security and defense sector capacity, grounded in the respect for Moldova's constitutional neutrality. Both countries stressed the need to continue enhancing cooperation on cybersecurity and digital transformation, strengthening capacities to counter and prevent cybercrime and related crimes, and implementing national cyber defense policies. Moldova expressed appreciation for the United States' technical cooperation to support Moldova's forensic systems and increase capacity of law enforcement institutions, highlighting the opening of a new Recruitment and Evaluation Center.

On March 14, on the sidelines of the Strategic Dialogue, Moldovan Minister of Defense Anatolie Nosatii and U.S. Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense Laura Cooper signed a Bilateral Concept providing a framework for support to institutional reform and military capacity building and modernization.

The United States and Moldova acknowledged the importance of working together to build a stronger, more resilient economy and diversified energy sector as key steps toward enhancing Moldova's national security, and which will be furthered through significant U.S. economic development and energy-related assistance.

Moldova's delegation expressed their appreciation for the support provided by the USAID Moldova Energy Security Activity (MESA), including technical assistance in helping Moldova satisfy its commitments towards adopting EU energy policies. Both countries acknowledged the importance of continuing efforts to invest in energy infrastructure to diversify Moldova's energy supplies in the long term and strengthen its resilience to threats to its energy security. Moreover, both countries share a common vision of a stronger, more diverse economy, one that is firmly rooted in a robust, private sector with expanding foreign trade relationships, supported through sector-specific industry associations, improved quality and competitiveness of Moldovan exports, access to financial solutions, and continued regulatory reform and transparency.

Recognizing the importance of the ties between the American and Moldovan people to the overall bilateral relationship, Moldova and the United States held the inaugural meeting of the People to People Ties Working Group, focused on exchanges, cultural ties, and strategic communications. The two countries committed to build on the successes of existing educational, cultural, and professional exchanges and to encourage future programs. They expressed enthusiasm over the upcoming return of Peace Corps volunteers to Moldova in 2023, noting the positive contributions of more than 1,500 volunteers over the last 30 years. Both countries

intend to continue to work on the issue of strategic communications, and the United States committed to supporting this effort by providing Moldova with both practical and technical assistance. Furthermore, the United States intends to continue its support to Moldovan efforts to modernize and expand university curricula to help build a modern workforce. Moldova and the United States noted the value of the robust partnership between the State of North Carolina and the Republic of Moldova, including recently expanded connections with North Carolina universities.

Moldova and the United States also launched a new Strategic Dialogue Civil Society Platform, which included representatives of Moldovan civil society along with Moldovan and U.S. senior officials. The Platform highlighted the importance of civil society in Moldova's European path and the need for consultation with non-government and private sector organizations to inform policymaking.

The Strategic Dialogue was hosted by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and European Integration and included interagency and inter-ministerial representatives from both governments. The meeting featured senior U.S. officials from the Department of State, U.S. Agency for International Development, Department of Defense, and Peace Corps. The Moldovan delegation included representatives from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and European Integration, Administration of the President of the Republic of Moldova, State Chancellery, Ministry of Justice, Ministry of Defense, Ministry of Internal Affairs, Ministry of Energy, Ministry of Infrastructure and Regional Development, Ministry of Finance, National Anti-Corruption Center, Anticorruption Prosecutor's Office, Ministry of Economic Development and Digitalization, Ministry of Labor and Social Protection, Ministry of Education and Research, Ministry of Culture, Audiovisual Council, Public Services Agency, Agency for Inter-Ethnic Relations, Cyber Security and Information Technology Service, and Security and Intelligence Service.

Both countries expressed a strong interest in further strengthening their bilateral strategic partnership through the activities of the Strategic Dialogue's working groups and committed to hold the next working level meeting in Chisinau, Moldova, in autumn 2023 in preparation for the next session of the Strategic Dialogue in Washington in 2024.

End Text

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