

**Address by the Ambassador of Moldova, Mr Andrei Popov, presenting his
credentials to the PoR of the Republic of Cyprus, on June 9, 2023**

Your Excellency, Mr President,

It is my distinct honor and privilege to present to you the Letters of Credence accrediting me as Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the Republic of Moldova to the Republic of Cyprus. I would like to take this opportunity, to convey to you on behalf of the President of the Republic of Moldova Maia Sandu and the people of the Republic of Moldova the heartfelt greetings, along with the sincere hope that the friendly relations between our countries will further develop and expand to the benefit of both peoples.

It is particularly symbolic that today's ceremony is taking place just a week after your Excellency visited the Republic of Moldova to participate in the Second Summit of the European Political Community and shortly after your first meeting with President Sandu in Reykjavik in mid-May. We especially value the principled position that you reiterated on these occasions regarding Cyprus's respect of the territorial integrity, sovereignty and independence of the Republic of Moldova, as well as your country's full support towards Moldova's European integration and willingness to further assist Moldova on this path.

Your Excellency,

Moldova is passing through a decisive juncture in its history with both tremendous challenges and great opportunities.

For fifteen months a brutal war of aggression is waged by Russia against our neighbor Ukraine. While nothing compares to the tragedy and sufferings of Ukraine and its people, Moldova is arguably the second most exposed and most affected country by this war. Without the EU or NATO protection and with Russian troops still illegally stationing in the separatist Transnistrian region of Moldova, when the war broke out and Russian tanks were advancing towards our borders, we felt directly threatened and vulnerable. However, now - particularly after Ukraine succeeded to liberate Kherson and as long as it keeps the front line far from our borders - we no longer feel threatened militarily. Nevertheless, Moldova continues to cope with multiple negative effects of this war in the security, energy, trade,

economy and social fields. We also face hybrid threats, cyber-attacks, fake bomb alerts, propaganda, disinformation campaigns and attempts to destabilize the political situation by fugitive Moldovan oligarchs working together with Russia.

Despite all these challenges, we have managed to keep the situation stable and under control. We have also succeeded in achieving substantial progress in the area of justice reform, fighting corruption, bringing down inflation (from 34% last year to 16%), strengthening institutions, improving business climate and fostering societal and economic resilience. Apart from this, we have managed to overcome our dependence on the Russian energy, by finding alternative sources, strengthening our energy infrastructure, and promoting energy efficiency programs. Our paramount goal is to succeed in building a modern and competitive country where institutions and justice work in the interests of citizens and not in the interest of corrupt groups.

We see the full integration into the European Union as the only chance to survive as democracy and to restore the people's trust in our country's future. Last June, Moldova obtained, together with Ukraine, the EU candidate status. Our next goal is to open EU accession negotiations by the end of 2023, based on accelerating reforms and full implementation of EU recommendations. The Republic of Cyprus has experienced firsthand the positive transformational impact of the EU accession and membership and is a strong supporter of the EU enlargement process. We value very much this position and rely on your continues support to our European path.

Mr President,

For more than three decades, the unsolved Transnistrian conflict has been hampering my country's development and undermining regional security. As there are no ethnic or religious contradictions between the people on the two banks of the Nistru river, this conflict would have been long ago solved if it was not for the adverse external influences, namely the Russia's attempts to instrumentalize this frozen conflict to bring Moldova in its "sphere of influence".

Since 2005, the negotiations have been taking place in the "5+2" format, that includes OSCE, Russia and Ukraine as mediators, and EU and US as observers. However, the "5+2" has not convened since 2019 and it is hard to imagine how negotiations in this format

can resume as long as Russia is waging its war of aggression against Ukraine. Therefore, today the main platform for interaction with Tiraspol is in the “1+1” format of chief negotiators, backed by a dozen sectorial working groups. We are also engaged in a pragmatic dialogue with the Transnistrian de facto administration in order to solve current problems and make sure this conflict doesn't escalate. In parallel, we maintain a very favorable regime of trade for Transnistrian businesses, that over the years has led to a complete reorientation of the region's exports to the EU market. We also encourage people-to-people contacts, confidence building initiatives, joint projects and promote freedom of movement across the internal administrative line.

We are firmly committed to exclusively peaceful means for finding a comprehensive and sustainable solution to the Transnistrian conflict, based on the sovereignty and territorial integrity of the Republic of Moldova within its internationally recognized borders and without undermining the European perspective of the Republic of Moldova. The chances of achieving such a solution will largely depend on when, where and how the war will end. Here, it is necessary to emphasize the importance of full withdrawal of Russian troops and ammunitions illegally deployed on our territory, in accordance with international law and the OSCE commitments.

I take advantage of this opportunity to reiterate the principled and firm position of the Republic of Moldova in support of the territorial integrity, sovereignty and independence of the Republic of Cyprus, as well as of the comprehensive settlement of the Cyprus Problem on the basis of International Law and in line with the UN Charter and the relevant United Nations Security Council resolutions.

Your Excellency,

As Ambassador of the Republic of Moldova to the Republic of Cyprus, and with Your Excellency's kind support, I look forward to contributing during my mandate to further strengthening and diversifying our friendly relations and cooperation, both at bilateral and multilateral level, advancing economic cooperation, trade, investments, cultural and educational programs, cooperation in consular affairs, in the field of labor and social security. As President Sandu mentioned to you, we also express our gratitude for the good cooperation between our competent institutions in the field of prevention and combating money laundering and recuperation of the illegally acquired properties.

For me it is a great honor to be appointed Ambassador to your country. I would like to assure You that I will make every effort to advance cooperation and friendly relations between the Republic of Moldova and the Republic of Cyprus, as well as to become a reliable partner and a true friend of Cyprus and of its people.