**DECLARATION**

**by the Heads of State of Association Trio -**

**Georgia, Republic of Moldova and Ukraine**

We, the Heads of State of Georgia, Republic of Moldova and Ukraine have gathered in Batumi to strengthen the trilateral cooperation among our countries on European integration and reiterate our pledge to work together for the peaceful, democratic and prosperous European future for Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine.

The relations between the Associated Partners and the European Union are founded on the common values on which the EU is built – democracy, respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms, and the rule of law. We remain committed to implementing these values and promoting them in our relations on the international stage.

We reaffirm our unwavering commitment to advance further the process of our integration into the European Union through comprehensive reforms to strengthen our democratic institutions, and to progressively approximate our legislation in the relevant sectors with key elements of the EU *acquis*.

Association Agreements with the European Union are key roadmaps for reforms and their continuous implementation constitutes the groundwork for strengthening political association and further deepening of economic and sectoral integration of the three Associated Partners with the European Union.

Granting the European perspective to the three Associated Partners will be a strong incentive and provide an impetus for even deeper and more comprehensive reforms. In this context, we recall that pursuant to Article 49 TEU, Georgia, the Republic of Moldova and Ukraine, as European states, respecting the European values and committed to their promotion, may apply to become members of the European Union.

We agreed to continue working with the EU Institutions on putting into practice all the opportunities and potential provided by the provisions of the Association Agreements on Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Areas envisaging the gradual integration into the EU Internal Market, as stipulated by the Agreements and beyond, where the existing level of economic integration will allow further policy alignment and regulatory convergence. At the same time, the Association Agreements should remain flexible instruments which should be updated when and where needed to take due account of the evolution of the regulatory frameworks and economic developments, as stipulated in the AAs.

We will work to identify concrete priorities in the areas of common interest to enhance political dialogue and advance on economic and sectoral integration with the EU, especially in the areas of transport, energy, digital transformation, green economy, justice and home affairs, strategic communications and health care.

We reiterate our constant support to the Eastern Partnership based on shared ownership, mutual commitments and principles of differentiation and inclusivity, which has provided all its Partners with tools to strengthen democracy, support economic development and advance European integration, consistent with their interests, ambitions and capabilities.

We will work together with other interested Partners and EU institutions in order to ensure that the Eastern Partnership develops a strategic forward-looking agenda and remains a strong and effective policy that reflects the needs, ambitions and aspirations of each Partner, facilitates Partners’ European integration, provides relevant instruments to achieve their goals and advances the peace and prosperity for the region as a whole. In this regard, we welcome the EU proposal of economic and investment plan for the Eastern Partnership along with the Top Ten Targets and flagship initiatives. We look forward to discuss these proposals with the EU as part of the comprehensive agenda of bringing Eastern Partners ever closer to the EU. At the same time, we reiterate our expectations of setting ambitious long-term goals of the Eastern Partnership and enhancing its strategic vision. In this context, we believe that the Eastern Partnership Summit in December should give new political and strategic impetus for the initiative, and stand ready to actively contribute in making it successful and results-oriented.

Recognising the crucial importance of the EU assistance in the implementation of an ambitious and complex European-oriented reform agenda, we will work towards ensuring the best application of the EU assistance tools and instruments, primarily the Neighbourhood, Development and International Cooperation Instrument (NDICI), as well as by seeking access to alternative funds and resources at EU disposal, based on the principle of conditionality.

We will work towards cooperating with various regional initiatives involving the EU member states complementary to our efforts, including in the area of connectivity, green and digital transition, and circular economy. In this light, we will explore cooperation possibilities with the Three Seas Initiative as a move towards achieving EU connectivity goals and anchoring our states physically with the EU.

We will work closely to increase our resilience to better respond to the challenges to regional and European security. We are committed to cooperate with the European Union on common security and defence policy (CSDP), including on countering hybrid threats, strengthening cyber resilience, fighting disinformation, developing cooperation platforms with the EU’s relevant agencies and services. We stay committed to participate in CSDP missions and operations and bring our contribution to the EU’s efforts towards peace and stability in the world.

We look forward to strengthening cooperation between our countries and with our Black Sea partners to ensure the security and stability in the Black Sea Region. We recall the 17 June 2019 EU Council Conclusions reaffirming the EU’s long-standing commitment to fostering prosperity, stability, and resilience in the Black Sea area. We share the EU’s concerns about the security challenges in the Black Sea area, reiterating that respect for international law, including the principles of independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity, the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea, including freedom of navigation are fundamental for the security and cooperation in the Black Sea area. We will engage our Black Sea partners in order to jointly promote the sustainable development of the region, as well as make full use of the opportunities that the Black Sea provides for wider and secure connectivity between Europe and Asia.

We express our gratitude for EU’s firm support to the sovereignty and territorial integrity within the internationally recognized borders of Georgia, Republic of Moldova and Ukraine, including through implementing relevant restrictive measures when necessary. In this regard, we welcome the reconfirmation of the EU’s five guiding principles for the EU-Russia relations, and we are ready to intensify our cooperation with the EU on strengthening resilience and combatting hybrid threats. We also welcome the EU’s greater role and engagement in finding and implementing peaceful conflicts’ solutions directed at restoring territorial integrity of our states.

It is understood that Russia’s annexation attempts and illegal occupation of the territories of Georgia, its aggression in the east of Ukraine and temporary occupation of Crimea as well as the unresolved conflict in the Transnistrian region of the Republic of Moldova pose a serious threat to the region and Europe as a whole. We are ready to explore together with the EU the ways to achieve peaceful settlement of the conflicts and ensure the long-lasting peace, stability and security in the region, including through enhanced EU role and engagement.

In this context, we noted the Conclusions of the European Council of 24 June 2021, where the EU leaders expressed the need to further deepen and intensify the political, economic and people-to-people ties and cooperation with the Eastern Partners with a view to increasing their resilience as well as acknowledged the European aspirations and European choice of the Associated Partners.

Accession to the European Union is a goal that unites our three states. European integration has no alternative for our countries and no third party could influence this sovereign choice. We have already achieved considerable progress in our relations with the European Union.

Backed by the strong will of our peoples to become a part of the European family, we stand united in our determination to work towards achieving acknowledgement of the European perspective for Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine opening the way for future membership of our three states in the EU.

Signed in Batumi, on the 19th of July 2021, in the English language.

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Salome Zourabichvili**  **President of Georgia** | **Maia Sandu**  **President of the Republic of Moldova** | **Volodymyr Zelenskyy**  **President of Ukraine** |