

Statement

of Mr. Vasile Tarlev, Prime Minister of the Republic of Moldova, within the meeting of the Heads of Government regarding the negotiations on the simultaneous extension and amendment of CEFTA

(Bucharest, Romania, 6 April 2006)

Dear Prime Ministers, Ladies and Gentlemen,

Firstly, I would like to congratulate the Romanian Government on the excellent organisation of this meeting which, holding the Chairmanship of CEFTA, contributed during the exploratory discussions to the identification of adequate answers to the raised question marks regarding the possible development scenarios of the future single free trade area in the region.

After some deliberations and analyses of a number of possibilities, the representatives of the participating states and of the European Commission have shown sufficient imagination and flexibility, being able not only to propose innovative scenarios but also to achieve a consensus, identifying the optimum solution – modernisation and simultaneous accession to CEFTA. During the forthcoming negotiations, I believe it could be logical to take as a basis for the future negotiations, the text agreed upon within the Trade Working Group of the Stability Pact for South Eastern Europe, in the working sessions of which have participated the representatives of all states invited to accede to CEFTA.

Simultaneous admission to CEFTA of the countries which have already signed bilateral free trade agreements, according to the updated accession criteria, would facilitate and accelerate the process of enlargement and modernisation of the single free trade zone in the region.

At its outset, CEFTA was often perceived as a framework for facilitation of the process of further integration of participating states into the EU.

It is significant that today the Political Declaration, by means of which the negotiating process for the extension and modernisation of CEFTA will be launched, will keep this tradition, all the Signatory States having as main objective - accession to the EU.

Moldova has clearly set its objective of accession to the EU, this option being supported by the absolute majority of the political parties and people. An additional acknowledgement of this fact was the adoption by unanimity by the Parliament of the Republic of Moldova in June 2005 of the Joint Declaration regarding co-operation for attaining the objective of European integration.

The European integration has become a national idea in Moldova, contributing to the strengthening of Moldovan society. We understand that the path of the Republic of Moldova towards the EU is not an easy one, but we are committed to undertake all the necessary actions for fulfilling the EU requirements and attaining the set objective.

The policy of European integration of Moldova is based on two main pillars: (i) implementation of the Action Plan Moldova-UE and (ii) taking advantages of possibilities resulting from the participation of Moldova in the regional initiatives from South East Europe – Stability Pact, South-East European Cooperation Process (SEECF) as well as the future modified CEFTA. These are two priority directions of the European integration process of Moldova which often overlap and complement each other.

Thus, the Action Plan Moldova – EU foresees the possibility of granting the Autonomous Trade Preferences to the Republic of Moldova similar to those offered by the EU to the states participating in the Stabilisation and Association Process. Currently, Moldova has initiated the process of fulfilment of the conditions and recommendations of the European Commission and we hope that the EU will take a positive decision in this regards as soon as possible.

At the same time, Moldova actively participates in all regional projects within the Stability Pact for South Eastern Europe and, benefiting from the support of the European Commission and of the states from the region, we hope that on 4 May in Thessaloniki, a decision will be taken regarding the accession of our country to the SEECF as a fully-fledged member.

Moldova will further take full advantages of the opportunities resulting from the advancement in the relations with the EU through the Action Plan Moldova – EU and fostering of regional co-operation with the countries from South East Europe.

The support offered by the EU and the Stability Pact for South Eastern Europe to the process of establishing a new modernised CEFTA which, after Bulgaria's and Romania's accession to the EU will comprise five countries from the Western Balkans and Moldova, is important and significant. A single multilateral regional free trade agreement, jointly with the EU Autonomous Trade Preferences, will contribute to attracting new direct investments in our countries and extension of intra-regional trade.

Moldova joined the Memorandum of Understanding regarding Liberalisation and Facilitation of Trade signed on 27 June 2001 in Brussels, signed bilateral Free Trade Agreements with all Signatory States of this Memorandum, has institutional relations with the EU and a bilateral Action Plan, is member of the WTO and actively has participated in the sessions of the Trade Working Group within the Stability Pact.

Taking into consideration these considerations, Moldova declares its availability to become member to the future modernised CEFTA and subscribe to the Joint Declaration on launching negotiations regarding the enlargement and amendment of CEFTA.

Finally, I would like to express my hope that by making use of the mechanisms provided by CEFTA, Stability Pact and the SEECP, all the states from the South Eastern Europe could further explore the existing possibilities and assist each other with a view to attaining the common objective – integration into the EU

Thank you for your attention.