

WTO Trade Policy Review of Moldova: UK Statement

Chair, let me join others in welcoming State Secretary, Vadim Gumene, from the Ministry of Economy, to this Trade Policy Review and pay tribute to Moldova's excellent Ambassador Tatiana Molcean, who seems so omnipresent in this city that I wonder if she has an identical twin sister. Buna dimineata! [Good morning!]

Let me echo others' thanks to the Government of Moldova and to colleagues from the WTO Secretariat for producing their respective reports. And let me also thank our Discussant, the Ambassador of Thailand, for ably facilitating this review and for her reflections. From the outset, let me recognise, as Ambassador Filipenko of Ukraine has so eloquently done, Moldova's extraordinary efforts to support Ukraine during the course of Putin's aggression. Picking up the comments from the representative of the Russian Federation, it's time for President Putin to respect the rules and procedures of international law and withdraw his troops from the sovereign territory of Ukraine and put an end to the crimes against humanity being perpetrated against the people of Ukraine.

Let me too recognise some of the extraordinary measures which Moldova has taken. It has welcomed, and continues to welcome, hundreds of thousands of Ukrainians that have crossed the border, more per head of population than any other country in the world – the vast majority of whom are women, children and the elderly. What generosity. What solidarity. In energy, Moldova has – alongside Ukraine – integrated into the regional-international electricity grid. It is also working on a joint crisis management platform. And yet, despite the enormous challenges it faces, Moldova is still committed to fulfilling its WTO obligations. This is evidenced by Moldova's efforts here today and the significant strides it has made since its first review. It reflects Moldova's strong support for this Organization and for the Rules-Based Multilateral Trading System, both inside and outside of this house.

Turning to our bilateral relationship, I am pleased to report that during this review period, the United Kingdom and Moldova signed a Strategic Partnership, Trade & Cooperation Agreement, which entered into force in 2021. This agreement has considerably strengthened our trading relationship. In 2021, total trade in Goods and Services between the UK and Moldova was £1.2 billion. That's an increase of over 30% from 2020. Like the UK, Moldova enjoys a strong services sector, which attracted the largest share of inward FDI stock, led by financial and insurance activities. Our agreement also sets out the UK and Moldova's ambitions for our future relationship including the strengthening of our political, economic, security and cultural ties. From a commercial perspective, several large UK companies are already established in Moldova, including in the pharmaceutical sector. The British Embassy in Chişinău has also supported a number of projects to promote the development of the Moldovan private sector, including the manufacturing of luxury British clothing brands in Moldova. Turning to the Reports produced for this review,

the UK would like to thank Moldova for its helpful responses to our advanced questions. For transparency, the UK had asked for clarifications regarding Moldova's regulatory framework, national development strategy, IP enforcement mechanisms, and agricultural sector reforms.

Chair, the United Kingdom warmly welcomes the broad range of reforms that Moldova has implemented over the last five years. These reforms have been crucial for businesses in both our countries. For example, authorities have reduced the number of activities subject to licensing, and where licensing is required, this is now generally done electronically. Moldova has also helpfully reduced the number of inspection bodies and inspections, with a view to lowering regulatory costs for businesses while increasing the efficiency of controls. These measures provide an attractive environment to facilitate greater levels of investment. The UK also welcomes the active role that Moldova plays in discussions and reform initiatives here within the WTO. Specifically, let me commend Moldova's accession to the GPA in 2016 and its participation in a number of Joint Initiatives which are delivering for businesses and consumers around the world, including the Services Domestic Regulation and e-commerce.

In conclusion, the United Kingdom welcomes the progress that Moldova has made since its first review. Moldova's reforms have resulted in a more open and more liberal economy which welcomes and values foreign participation, and which champions the values of the Rules-Based Multilateral Trading System. The UK welcomes Moldova's intent to build on these developments and looks forward to continuing our close relationship, as proactive, progressive and outward-facing partners. We wish our Moldovan friends and partners a fruitful second Trade Policy Review.

Thank you.