



HR/VP SPEECHES

Speech by High Representative/Vice-President Federica Mogherini at the plenary session of the European Parliament on the state of play of the implementation of the Association Agreement with Ukraine

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Check against delivery!

Thank you Mr President.

We are here to discuss our [Association Agreement with Ukraine](#) and I will come to this in a moment, but I also want to start by mentioning two other issues that were just mentioned by the Rapporteur [Michael Gahler]. First of all, I would like to mention once again the awarding of the Sakharov Prize to Oleg Sentsov, and let me join your call for his liberation – as we have asked constantly all through these years.

I would also like to update you on our recent discussions about the situation in the Sea of Azov. Yesterday, Foreign Minister [of Ukraine] Pavlo Klimkin was our guest at the [Foreign Affairs Council](#), in Brussels. We discussed ways to increase support to the regions of south-east Ukraine. The Commission has made available the [first €500 million of the new Macro-Financial Assistance programme to Ukraine](#). I think these are clear gestures that show to Ukrainian people the solidarity of the European Union and the consistency of our policy.

We are now looking into further projects to support the Ukrainian regions affected by the situation in the Azov Sea, in close coordination with our Member States and also with the European financial institutions.

Last week in Milan, at the [Ministerial Council of the Organisation for Security and Cooperation \[OSCE\] in Europe](#), I had meetings with both [Pavlo Klimkin](#) [Minister for Foreign Affairs of Ukraine] and Russia's Foreign Minister [Sergey Lavrov](#). I took the occasion to stress very clearly that we do not recognise the illegal annexation of the Crimean peninsula, and that the current tensions are a direct consequence of Russia's violation of the OSCE's founding principles and of international law.

We expect Russia to immediately release the vessels and their crew. International law obliges the Russian Federation to ensure the unhindered and free passage of all vessels through the Kerch Strait. Russia's behavior violates international law and is causing economic damage not just to Ukraine but also to ships sailing under EU flags.

[We have already discussed this issue here in the European Parliament, in this hemicycle, in October](#), and your report, Mr [Michael] Gahler is also vocal on this – rightly so.

But now let me focus on the main subject of our discussion, the report on the implementation of the Association Agreement by Ukraine.

Five years have passed since 2014, and we share the report's assessment that, in these five years and despite very difficult circumstances, Ukraine has passed important reforms, to deliver on its citizens' aspirations.

I will have an opportunity to discuss progress directly with Prime Minister [of Ukraine, Volodymyr] Groyzman and his government at the [Association Council next Monday](#), in Brussels. And I would like to thank the [EU-Ukraine Parliamentary Association Committee](#) for their work on monitoring the implementation of the Association Agreement – thank you.

Over the past year, many of the reforms demanded by the Ukrainian people have started to take shape. New laws have been adopted on decentralisation, intellectual property rights, on the environment, on food safety, on energy, and a new company law. A number of important reforms have been launched on pensions, healthcare and education. Public administration and decentralisation reforms are being implemented. Reforms also advanced in the areas of the judiciary and anti-corruption - even if at a slower pace.

A landmark bill on national security was adopted in June – I have been discussing this several times with both the President [of Ukraine, Petro Poroshenko] and the Prime Minister [of Ukraine, Volodymyr Groyzman] in Kyiv - introducing the principle of parliamentary oversight over the security sector. Now, it needs to be followed-up with secondary legislation, including on the reform of the security sector.

But the report also makes clear that many challenges remain and that was, I believe, a clear and shared understanding by all of us. The fight against corruption is probably the most urgent - I share your views. We are looking forward to the High Anti-Corruption Court becoming operational. All anti-corruption institutions must be fully independent and free from political pressures, and this is also true for prosecutors. The National Anti-Corruption Bureau of Ukraine is carrying on a very delicate task. It is essential that high-level corruption cases are prosecuted, including on the large-scale banking fraud unveiled in 2014.

We have also made clear that electronic declarations should be a tool to fight corruption - and not an obstacle for civil society organisations that are working to make Ukraine a better place. We have asked to repeal e-declarations for anti-corruption activists and foreign members of supervisory boards of state-owned enterprises.

Ukraine is making progress in strengthening democratic institutions and human rights; however we are worried about the attacks against civil society activists and journalists, which are becoming more and more frequent. One such case is the [acid attack against Kateryna Handzyuk who passed away last month](#). We expect these incidents to be not only investigated swiftly, but most of all to be prevented in the future.

One of Ukraine's main assets is the strength of its civil society - I have seen this first hand many times in Kyiv. We will continue to work on the side of all who have decided to engage personally for Ukraine's common good.

We have also encouraged Ukraine to make best use of international consultation mechanisms when preparing important legislative acts, for example those affecting the rights of the persons belonging to national minorities. It is important to always take into account the recommendations of specialised international bodies, such as the Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights at the OSCE and the Venice Commission of the Council of Europe.

We, the European Union, will continue to be on Ukraine's side - to end the conflict in the east, to end the illegal annexation of the Crimean peninsula, but also to deliver on the aspirations' of all Ukrainian citizens.

The Association Agreement is the most ambitious agreement that the European Union has ever developed with any partner country. And since 2014, [the European Union has invested in Ukraine more than in any other country in the world](#). We have put together the biggest support package in our history.

We want Ukraine to succeed and we are working to make sure that Ukraine succeeds, making its own choices but with our support - in spite of all difficulties and obstacles on the way.

I would like to thank you again for your report, for your constant focus on Ukraine, and on the progress we can achieve together. Thank you.

Link to the video:

Closing remarks

Grazie Mr President.

Just a few words to thank again the rapporteur [Michael Gahler] for an excellent work that will inform also the continuation of our work on the implementation of the Association Agreement, and I would like to thank all the colleagues for their inputs. This will also be reflected in the work we will do at the next session of the [Association Council next Monday](#) in Brussels, with the Prime Minister of Ukraine [Volodymyr Groysman].

Link to the closing remarks:

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