

PRESS RELEASE

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Joint Press Release following the first Association Council meeting between the European Union and Ukraine

The European Union and Ukraine held today the first meeting of the Association Council under the new Association Agreement. The EU and Ukraine reconfirmed the common objective to build a democratic, stable and prosperous country. The EU and the Government of Ukraine agreed to continue to work together towards Ukraine's political association and economic integration with the EU.

The Association Council welcomed the provisional application of the relevant parts of the EU-Ukraine Association Agreement as of 1 November 2014 and highlighted the importance of swift ratification of the Association Agreement by all EU Member States in accordance with their national procedures. The Association Agreement will be the basis on which Ukraine will accelerate its process of enhanced reforms and economic modernisation. This includes the adequate preparation for the implementation of Title IV of the Association Agreement, in accordance with its international commitments and with significant EU support.

The Association Council acknowledged the importance of intensifying much needed political and economic reforms in Ukraine and the EU's support package to support Ukraine in its efforts for launching this renewed reform process, as well as the EU's Ukraine Support Group and the EU Advisory Mission. The EU and Ukraine agreed on the importance of coordination of support and on the need for Ukraine to rapidly finalise a National Reform Strategy 2015 – 2017 in order to set out the priorities and to attract international support for reform and recovery. In this regard the Association Council highlighted the importance of the solid preparation of an international conference in support of Ukraine so that it can take place in early 2015.

The Association Council welcomed the financial support provided by the European Union of EUR 1.36 billion in the framework of macro-financial assistance programmes, and notably recalled the disbursement of a last tranche of MFA with the amount of EUR 500 million on 3 December. The Association Council acknowledged the EU's readiness, in coordination with other donors and international financial institutions, to continue support for reforms as well as rebuilding of Ukraine's economy.

The EU and Ukraine condemned the illegal annexation of Crimea by the Russian Federation, which they will not recognise, and the continued presence and infiltration of illegal forces, mercenaries, weapons and military equipment originating from the territory of the Russian Federation. The EU and Ukraine agreed that the Minsk Protocol and Memorandum need to be implemented in full scope and without further delay, as a step towards a sustainable political solution of the conflict, which needs to be based on the respect for Ukraine's independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity.

The Association Council welcomed the humanitarian assistance provided by the EU aiming at supporting the most vulnerable populations affected by the conflict. The Association Council also welcomed the provision of material assistance and the deployment of EU experts through the EU Civil Protection Mechanism on Ukraine to advise Ukrainian authorities on the management of Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) and on emergency management, and stressed importance of continuing cooperation in this regard.

The Association Council reconfirmed the commitment to the shared objective of visa-free travel in due course provided that conditions for well-managed and secure mobility set out in the Visa Liberalisation Action Plan are in place. It welcomed that Ukraine has fulfilled all the benchmarks under the first phase of the Visa Liberalisation Action Plan. It took positive note that the assessment of the benchmarks under the second phase has been launched and encouraged full and effective implementation of all benchmarks.

The Association Council underlined the importance of cooperation in the field of energy between Ukraine and the European Union in order to ensure energy security of Ukraine and the European continent as a whole. The Association Council welcomed the trilateral Ukraine – EU – Russian Federation protocol on gas supplies from Russia to Ukraine for the coming winter, and noted the implementation by all sides of the agreed arrangement. These arrangements will be an important step towards ensuring long term uninterrupted energy supply to Ukraine and Europe. It agreed to continue close monitoring of the situation. The Association Council expressed its readiness to continue cooperation between Ukraine and the EU on urgent energy sector reforms in Ukraine, on the joint modernisation and operation of the Ukrainian gas transportation system and storages and on securing gas supplies from Europe to Ukraine.

The Association Council welcomed the signing today of the agreement between Ukraine and EBRD to finance the reconstruction, repair and technical upgrading of Urengoy - Pomary - Uzhgorod gas pipeline. This complements the agreement signed on 1 December 2014 between Ukraine and the EIB and, together with the recently launched European Commission-World Bank Trust Fund on the reform of Naftogas, is a very significant step forward in ensuring that the Ukrainian gas transmission system remains a reliable gas transportation route.

The Association Council welcomed Ukraine's intention to join the EU Programme for the Competitiveness of Enterprises and Small and Medium-sized Enterprises "COSME" and confirmed readiness of the EU and Ukraine to sign in the nearest future the agreement on associate participation of Ukraine in the EU Programme on Research and Innovation "Horizon 2020". The Association Council also underlined the wish of Ukraine to join the Research and Training Programme of the Euratom (2014-2018) complementing "Horizon 2020" and to start the relevant negotiations as soon as possible.

The Association Council underlined the importance of signing the Common Aviation Area Agreement between Ukraine and the EU at the earliest possible date in 2015. The Association Council stressed that its implementation is envisaged by the Ukraine - EU Association Agreement and is an important part of the EU-Ukraine transport agenda. The Council also reaffirmed the importance of integration of Ukraine's transport network into the EU TEN-T transport network.

Ukraine and the EU noted mutual interest concerning Ukraine's participation in the Creative Europe Programme, most likely as of 1 January 2015. They call on interested cultural and creative organizations to use the possibilities of the Programme for transnational cooperation between cultural and creative actors and the possibilities for transnational circulation of cultural and creative works and the mobility of professionals in the field.

The Association Council launched the institutional framework of enhanced cooperation by adopting the AA/DCFTA Rules of Procedure of the Association Council and the Association Committee and Sub-Committees.

The Association Council welcomed the progress made to update the EU – Ukraine Association Agenda and confirmed readiness to approve it in the near future as an important tool to facilitate the implementation and monitoring of the Association Agreement, by creating a practical framework through which the overall objectives of political association and economic integration can be realised and by providing a list of priorities for joint work on sector by sector basis.
