
MOLDOVA MUST CONTINUE ITS EUROPEAN INTEGRATION, WHILE AT THE SAME TIME MAINTAINING PRAGMATIC RELATIONS WITH RUSSIA

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Moldova is implementing a balanced foreign policy approach, conducting the Europeanisation of the country, while at the same time maintaining pragmatic relations with Russia, Moldovan Minister of Foreign Affairs and European Integration Aureliu Ciocoi told LETA in an interview.

"Moldova is first and foremost pro-Moldovan. We work for the good of our country," he said.

"As far as Russia is concerned, we call this approach a balanced foreign policy. Moldova is a small country whose society is divided into two large parts - almost 50% versus 50%. One side believes that Moldova's future should be with the EU, while the other believes that it would be better for the country to have a closer relationship with Russia. With such a divided society, we have no choice but to work with everyone in this world," the minister added.

He said that Moldova is firmly on the path of European integration and is implementing the terms of the 2014 EU Association Agreement. "Fulfilling all these criteria is a top priority for Moldova, as it helps us to develop our country. By no means are we doing this just to report something to Brussels, but to raise the standard of living in the country."

"We must be wise and act accordingly in our foreign policy, continuing our efforts in Europeanising Moldova, while at the same time pursuing a pragmatic relationship with Russia," he said.

"Like many other countries in the world, we are not a subject of international relations, but an object. We have no influence, we have to adjust our foreign policy to the conditions at home and beyond our borders. In the case of Moldova, this is the only realistic way to ensure the development of our country. Reforms, Europeanisation of the country and a positive, proactive and pragmatic dialogue with Russia. I repeat, all while defending Moldova's national interests," Ciocoi emphasized.

"For example, last year we exported almost 200,000 tons of apples to Russia. At that time, we only exported 1,000 tonnes to the EU. This clearly shows that the eastern market is still very important for Moldova, as it is still an agrarian economy," the minister went on to say.

He also made it clear that the Republic of Moldova is and will stand for Ukraine's territorial integrity within its internationally recognized borders, while at the same time admitting that opinions on this issue among the country's residents differ. "This is democracy. We cannot imprison people for their views. We need to educate them," he said.

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