

Grant EU Candidate Status to Ukraine and Moldova Without Delay, MEPs Demand



BY NATALIA KOCHIASHVILI

With 529 votes to 45 and 14 abstentions, European Parliament adopted a resolution on Thursday calling on the Heads of State/Government - who hold their summit on June 23-24 in Brussels in European Council - to grant EU candidate status to Ukraine and the Republic of Moldova 'without delay'. They should do the same with Georgia 'once its government has delivered' on the priorities indicated by the European Commission.

"In the context of the brutal Russian war of aggression against Ukraine, this move would equate to showing leadership, resolve and vision," say MEPs. They insist that there is no 'fast-track' for EU membership and that accession remains a merit-based and structured process, which requires EU membership criteria to be fulfilled and is dependent on the effective implementation of reforms.

Parliament invites the authorities of Ukraine, the Republic of Moldova and Georgia to 'unambiguously demonstrate their political determination to implement the European ambitions of their people', accelerating reforms in order to effectively fulfil the criteria for EU membership as soon as possible.

Ukrainians, Moldovans and Georgians deserve to live in free, democratic and prosperous countries that are proud and committed members of the European family,

MEPs state, urging the European Council to take an important first step towards fulfilling the legitimate aspirations of the citizens of these three countries.

The resolution stresses that there is no alternative to enlargement, which is 'more than ever a geostrategic investment' in a stable, strong and united EU. The prospect of full EU membership for the countries striving to become member states is in the European Union's own political, economic and security interests. MEPs demand that the enlargement process be 're-energised' and unblocked as regards the Western Balkans. EU High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, Josep Borrell addressed Georgians ahead of an EU summit in Brussels saying that "this is a step forward, they should not look at it negatively, they [Georgians] now have a clear path, they have things to do, a schedule. That is a significant step forward, keep working on it, you are on the right track."

Asked when Georgia will meet the criteria, whether it will be granted candidate status, Borrell said it would definitely be so. "Exactly when the criteria are met, the candidate status will be granted automatically," Borrell said.

Georgian Prime Minister Irakli Garibashvili said that the blood shed by the Georgian people in wars fought against Russia over the decades was one of the clearest arguments why the country deserved the European Union membership

candidate status. The responded to the EP's resolution while addressing soldiers gathered at the opening ceremony of the Wounded Fighters' Week in Tserovani.

PM referred to the Georgian service-members' demonstration of exemplary heroism in the 2008 war against Russia, pointing out the EU's decision on not granting the status to Georgia outright had put all this into question.

"We do not compare ourselves to anyone's army, but we, Georgians, survived until today with 2 main forces: this is our faith, our church and our army, our people, our fighting spirit. Today, unfortunately, this has been put into question."

Garibashvili underlined he was happy with the success of Ukraine and Moldova in receiving membership candidate status, but stressed Georgia had deserved the status more than the Associated Trio partners.

"We all understand very well that today in the world there is a different state of affairs, very difficult processes are taking place. We must face this peacefully and continue to move forward, to strengthen our country, to strengthen our army, to defend our country, to protect our people", he said. Our main dream is that one day we will meet in a united and strong Georgia. This should be the main unifying idea of our nation and our people".

On June 17, the European Commission issued recommendations that Ukraine and

Moldova should be granted a European perspective and EU candidate status on mandatory terms, while Georgia should be given a European perspective. In order to receive the status of a candidate, the fulfillment of the relevant conditions by the country must be evaluated. The recommendations of the European Commission are accompanied by a list of conditions to be met by all three countries. Among the 12 conditions to be met by Georgia for EU candidate status are: overcoming political polarization, proper functioning of institutions and their independence, real independence and impartiality of the judiciary, effective investigation of elite corruption cases, de-oligarchization, free media environment, etc.

Ukraine (on 28 February), the Republic of Moldova and Georgia (both on 3 March) applied for EU membership in the wake of the Russian attack against Ukraine. On 17 June, the Commission published opinions on the 3 applications, recommending that the Council confirm Ukraine, the Republic of Moldova and Georgia's perspectives of becoming member states of the EU.

Recall that Article 49 of the EU Treaty establishes that any European country that respects the values referred to in Article 2 and is committed to promoting them may apply to become a member of the European Union. The decision on new EU membership is taken unanimously by the Council, after consulting the Commission and getting Parliament's consent.

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Helsinki Commission Urges European Council to Grant Candidate Status to Georgia



► The Helsinki Commission is a United States Government agency monitoring security in Europe.



► "We believe they [Georgian people] too should be offered an equally concrete roadmap to EU membership", the statement said.

BY KHATIA BZHALAVA

US Helsinki Commission calls on the European Council to grant candidate status to Ukraine, Moldova, and Georgia. Helsinki Commission Chairman Sen. Ben Cardin (MD), Co-Chairman Rep. Steve Cohen (TN-09), and Ranking Members Sen. Roger Wicker (MS) and Rep. Joe Wilson (SC-02) issued the relevant joint statement.

The signatories of the statement praised the historic decision of the European Commission to recommend EU candidate status for Ukraine and Moldova, stressing that

"all countries have the sovereign right to choose their own alliances and determine their own foreign policies". The statement also focuses on Georgia's achievements on the European integration path, stating that Georgia should be given "an equally concrete roadmap to EU membership."

"The people of Georgia also have sacrificed much for their European identity over several decades, despite Russian warmongering and the challenges of painful reforms. They have demonstrated that they can rise to the challenge if and when the path is clear. We believe they too should be offered an equally concrete roadmap to

EU membership," the commission notes.

The statement reads that ahead of this week's European Council meeting, US Helsinki Commission encourages European partners to grant all three countries candidate status.

"The path to liberal democracy is never without occasional setbacks and detours, and always in need of vigilance, careful effort, and compromise. We believe candidate status will give all three countries a fighting chance in their common European dream," reads the statement issued by the Commission.

The European Commission recom-

mended on Friday to grant EU candidate status to Ukraine and Moldova with conditions. The European Commission also recommended to the Council that Georgia should be given the perspective to become a member of the European Union.

According to the recommendation, Georgia should be granted candidate status once certain priorities in different areas of the reform agenda are addressed. The European Council will make its final decision regarding the three countries' pending applications for EU membership on June 23-24.

Rutte: In the case of Georgia, There is More to be Done, it is One Step Behind

BY MESSENGER STAFF

P Prime Minister of the Netherlands Mark Rutte stated before the meeting of the European Council that the Council would likely share the European Commission's recommendation and not grant Georgia candidate status because it is "one step behind."

According to Rutte, the European Union supports Georgia's European aspirations and intends to work with the country to reach the level where the Council can grant candidate status.

"We support Georgia's aspirations. I think we all agree with the European Commission that there is a clear European perspective for Moldova, Ukraine, and Georgia and that all of them still have a lot of work to do, especially Georgia - to

achieve candidate status. Enough work has been done by Moldova and Ukraine for candidate status, more work needs to be done in the case of Georgia but the European perspective and ambitions are clearly stated and we need to work with them. "The Netherlands is also working on a number of bilateral programs with Georgia to help them reach the level where we can grant candidate status," Rutte said.

Asked by reporters why Georgia will not receive the status today, the Prime Minister said that Moldova and Ukraine have made more progress compared to Georgia, while Georgia can be said to have the potential to run, but is one step behind.

Rutte noted that Europe sees and recognizes Georgia's European ambitions, but at the same time tells him that more needs to be done.



FRIDAY		JUNE 24	
Day		Partly cloudy	High: 30°C
Night		Light rain	Low: 18°C
SATURDAY		JUNE 25	
Day		Partly cloudy	High: 30°C
Night		Thunderstorms	Low: 18°C

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Ambassador of Turkiye to Georgia, H.E. Fatma Ceren Yazgan hosted a reception, say farewell to her friends and colleagues she has worked with during her mission in Georgia on June 22.

The Messenger wishes Her Excellency all the best in her career and life.











