



**EUROPEAN COMMISSION**

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**José Manuel Durão Barroso**

President of the European Commission

## **Remarks by President Barroso at the signing of the Association Agreements with Georgia, the Republic of Moldova and Ukraine**

Signing ceremony

**Brussels, 27 June 2014**

Today, we are signing Association Agreements between the European Union and three important European countries: Georgia, the Republic of Moldova and Ukraine. This is indeed a historic day: for the three countries themselves, for the European Union and for the whole of Europe.

For our three partners, it is a recognition of the significant progress made over recent years and of their strong political determination to come closer to the European Union; their shared outlook on a prosperous economic model; and their desire to live by the European spirit and with European values.

For the European Union, it is a solemn commitment to support Georgia, the Republic of Moldova and Ukraine, each step of the way, along the road of transforming their countries into stable, prosperous democracies.

These Association Agreements are the logical and natural outcome of a path started more than 20 years ago when these countries became independent sovereign states.

These Agreements are also a landmark in our Eastern Partnership policy that set the objective of achieving political association and economic integration with our partners, who were willing and ready to do so.

The Agreements we are signing today are the most ambitious the European Union has entered into so far. They will enable our partner countries to drive reforms, to consolidate the rule of law and good governance; and to give an impetus to economic growth in the region by granting access to the world's largest internal market and by encouraging cooperation across a wide range of sectors.

But let us be under no illusion. The task ahead is substantial. The Association Agreements' main objective is to help to deliver on the partner countries' own reforms, own ambitions.

To succeed will require strong political will. It will require effective coordination within each of the partner governments. It will require each of them to reach out to their parliaments, to opposition, to civil society in order to build a national consensus in favour of the measures required to guarantee a genuine and sustainable transformation. No international agreement can ever replace the momentum and political leadership within the country itself.

Key issues to address to make the reform process successful and irreversible include reforming the judiciary systems and public administration; improving efficiency and transparency; and fighting corruption.

It is also important to state that we are not seeking an exclusive relationship with our three partners, with Georgia, the Republic of Moldova and Ukraine. We believe in open societies, open economies, open regionalism.

These Agreements are positive agreements. They are meant to add more momentum to our partners' established international relations, not to compete with - or intrude in - our partners' relations with any neighbour. These Agreements are for something – they are not against anyone.

We are well aware of our partners' aspirations to go further; and we acknowledge their European choice. As we have stated before, these agreements do not constitute the endpoint of the EU's cooperation with its partners.

Quite the opposite. Signing these Association Agreements with Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Areas should not be seen as the end of the road, but as the beginning of a journey on which the European Union and these three partner countries are embarking together today.