

plementation. The Government of Lithuania should own at least 34% of the shares of the new NPP. Other co-owners could be power companies of Estonia and Latvia, which have already announced their agreement, as well as other investors. The Minister considers that, if the decision on constructing a new power-generating unit is taken this year, its construction may start in 2008 and be completed in 2013.

K. Dauksis also mentioned that, along with solving the issue of constructing a new power-generating unit, it is necessary to negotiate the extension of the operating life of operational second nuclear unit of the INPP until the new power-generating unit is completed. But he evaluated the chance of reaching an agreement on this issue as slight.

There is another question to this: what is going to happen to the town of Visaginas, where almost all residents are employed at the INPP or somehow connected with it? The very shutdown of the plant is a big business. Well-known Lithuanian companies are currently competing for the right to perform disassembly work and its service. Disassembly of the plant is going to take approximately 35 years. Over this time the specialists of today will grow old and will not be able to work for age reasons. At the moment, a strategy is being developed in order to establish several smaller facilities on the basis of a single big one of the INPP. It is necessary to prioritize economic needs and get people interested in founding their small businesses. It is assumed that this will allow for solving the problem of employment in Visaginas.

Inna Maximchik. 16.01.06.

ANDREI STRATAN: «THE MOST IMPORTANT GOAL OF MOLDOVA IS CONSISTENT INTEGRATION INTO THE EUROPEAN UNION INSTITUTIONS»

Exclusive interview of Andrei Stratan, Vice Prime Minister, Minister of Foreign Affairs and European Integration of the Republic of Moldova

The European Union has recently opened its representation in Chisinau. What are the priority tasks of Moldova in the field of integration into the European Union?

- **A. S.** First of all, I would like to note that currently Moldova has no a permanent representation of the European Union. At the same time, the EU Council, at the beginning of this year, appointed its Special Representative to Moldova Adriaan Jacobovits de Szeged, whose mission is to actively assist in peaceful solution of the Trans-Dniester problem and stability in the region.

During negotiations on the Plan of Actions, a political solution was made at the top level to open the Delegation of the European Commission in Chisinau, which will take place this September. In this context, I would like to note that on 1 January this year, Moldova opened its Permanent Representation in the European Union.

For the purpose of successful implementation of the Plan of Actions between the Republic of Moldova and the EU, the National Programme for introduction of the Plan of Actions was created, which represents a well-structured document in terms of strategy and tactics, with

clear tasks to involve state authorities and a specific schedule of implementation. Also, at this moment, the European strategy for the Republic of Moldova is being finalized; this is a document that presents even a more detailed project for achieving the priority goal in domestic and external policies of Moldova. Speaking about the initial tasks to achieve the essential goal by Moldova, i.e., a consistent integration into economic and social units of the European Union, the Republic of Moldova has assumed commitments to implement, by the end of 2007, coordinated measures stipulated by the Plan of Actions of Moldova and the EU. This plan attaches special attention to the very important package of priorities, namely:

- peaceful regulation of the Trans-Dniester conflict;
- enhancing of stability and efficacy of institutions that guarantee democracy and the rule of law;
- ensuring democratic elections in Moldova according to European standards;
- ensuring freedom of press and opinions;
- continuation of judicial reforms to achieve independence of courts;
- improvement of the investment climate through adequate structural reforms as regards ensuring non-discriminatory conditions and public openness; among other things, through combating corruption;
- intensification of fight with organized crime, including trafficking of people;
- ensuring effective management of migration flows; among other things, through initiation of the process to make an agreement on readmission between the EU and the Republic of Moldova.

It is known that Ukraine has become actively involved in the solution of the Trans-Dniester conflict. Its latest initiatives have been supported by all parties of the conflict, as well as by the European Union, NATO and other international institutions. Does this activity of Kiev mean that the role of Moscow in this region diminishes?

- **A. S.** At this stage, I will prefer not to hurry with conclusions about a consensus between all parties involved into the conflict as regards supporting the Ukrainian plan. The position of the Republic of Moldova on this plan was clearly stated in the package of documents, unanimously adopted by the Moldova Parliament on 10 June 2005.

As regards the roles played by Ukraine and Russia, the situation can be rather characterized as follows: Ukraine is gradually taking its proper place in the process of regulation, while the Russian Federation retains its exclusively important role. It should be remembered in this respect, that the Trans-Dniester conflict is located at the border with Ukraine, but not with Russia. Therefore, Kiev is directly interested in its solution. Today's leadership in Kiev takes significant measures so that Ukraine plays its proper role according to its position. We can only welcome activation of our neighbour and, at the same time, we believe that this will help find such a solution that will be beneficial, primarily, for the people of Moldova living on both sides of the Dniester River. So, the role of Russia is not diminished at all. Simply, we expect from Moscow a more constructive approach both in seeking a political solution of the Trans-Dniester problem and in its withdrawal of arms and troops according to Istanbul agreements taken by Russia at the OSCE summit in 1999.

Moldova is the only European country among «new neighbours» of the European Union who is member of WTO. To what extent, and how, does this status help Moldova to integrate into Europe?

- **A. S.** Accession to WTO, participation in the activities within the Pact of for South-East Europe and the South-East Europe Cooperation Process (SEEC), as well as in implementation of the Plan of Actions between Moldova and the EU are important tools to attain the main goal of Moldova, which is integration to the EU. WTO membership in itself includes a range of fields which coincide with the rules and legislation of the EU Common Market. Namely, they are: procurement, intellectual property, transparency of technical trade barriers, subsidies and rules of trade in services. For example, the General Agreement on Trade in Services (GATS) provides for commercial presence abroad and, hence, gives EU enterprises in Moldova certain rights to the common market. None of these WTO rules entails integration similar to the EU. However, they represent a useful foundation for transparency and predictability of these rules. The Plan of Actions between Moldova and the EU gives Moldova a significant degree of economic integration and a deeper political cooperation. An important element along this line is the opportunity included into the Plan of Actions for giving a broader access for Moldovan commodities to the EU market through autonomous trade preferences (ATP).

At the same time, being member of the Pact of Stability in South-East Europe, Moldova has signed and commenced implementing bilateral free trade agreements with Bulgaria, Romania and five countries which are parties to the Process of stability and association. In this context, we actively support the idea of creating a free trade area in the South-East Europe through integration to the Central European Free Trade Area (CEFTA) of countries which signed the respective Memorandum on trade liberalization or creation of a new free trade area in the South-East Europe (SEEFTEA).

Relations between the European Union and such new «new neighbour» as Belarus leave much to be desired. In what way would you characterize the current state of relations between Moldova and Belarus?

- **A. S.** Moldova has always been in favour of developing relations with all countries of the world. The basis of Moldovan-Belarusian relations is rather close trade and economic ties which are based on a number of intergovernmental agreements, and they are mutually beneficial. A special role is played by the Intergovernmental Moldovan-Belarusian Commission on trade and economic cooperation.

Moldovan-Belarusian relations in the field of trade and economic cooperation are characterized by high dynamics; in 2004, Moldova and Belarus reached an unprecedented high level of bilateral trade exchanges. The Republic of Belarus takes a firm 6th place among 128 foreign trade partners of the Republic of Moldova. In 2004, the total trade turnover between the two countries made 128 million USD. This was 26 percent higher compared to the previous period. The main items of Belarusian export to Moldova include oil products, tractors, ceramic tiles, oil bitumen, refrigerators and freezers, medicines, ethylene polymers, spare parts for motor vehicle and tractors, chip-wood plates, and tyres.

In 2004, new Belarusian commodities came to Moldova for the first time. They include «Belkommunmash» trolleybuses used in the town of Belci. Metal-working machine tools are

supplied to re-equip industrial enterprises of Moldova. Belarusian medical devices are used by medical institutions of the country.

In its turn, the Republic of Moldova is a traditional supplier to Belarus of fresh and canned fruits and vegetables, wines and cognac, seed and fodder corn, sunflower oil, and other agricultural produce.

In the current year, cooperation between the parties on supply of Moldovan fruits and vegetables to the consumer market of Belarus continues to enhance. In 2004, the total supply of products was 42,300 tons, which was 5,000 tons more than in 2003. This year, the Republic of Moldova plans to export to Belarus about 80,000 tons of fruits and vegetables.

We do not disregard the traditionally good relations between peoples of our countries. Preservation of Belarusian culture, national identity and traditions, study of one's own history and language, expansion and enhancing of relations between compatriots living in Moldova and their historical motherland go on, in general, successfully. However, new times require new, multi-faceted and dynamic solutions.

Leaders of the GUAM countries state that this organization is given a new dynamism and its role in the post-Soviet space will grow. What is Moldova's attitude towards prospects of existence of the CIS?

- **A. S.** At the GUAM summit held in Chisinau on 22 April 2005, Presidents of Azerbaijan, Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine made a decision to activate their actions within this association, and considered opportunities for cooperation with countries that are interested in GUAM activities.

In this context, the Republic of Moldova, as the Chair of the GUAM, supports the position to expand the format of cooperation of this association, as well as transformation of the GUAM into a regional organization.

The priorities of the GUAM development, discussed at the Summit, include cooperation in such strategic fields as: energy, security, cooperation with international organizations and member countries of the European Union or candidates to the EU. This fact does not contradict cooperation between GUAM countries and other CIS countries.

According to the Constitution, Moldova is a neutral state. How does this position agree with its strive to become member of NATO?

- **A. S.** First of all, we should note that at the official level Moldova has not made declarations about its strive to become member of NATO. At this stage, our main goal is to expand and intensify cooperation with the North Atlantic Treaty Organization. We do not speak so far about review of the neutral country status.

During a recent visit to Brussels, the head of the state addressed this Alliance with a proposal to develop and introduce an Individual partnership action plan (IPAP) within the programme «Partnership for Peace», which, we hope, will improve our interaction with the Alliance.

If we speak about concrete cooperation, then, for instance, in the field of environmental security, NATO helped to implement a project on disposal of the missile fuel «mélange» which was present in the country and presented a threat due to its chemical properties. Today, NATO helps us implement several projects. For example, to eliminate hazardous pesticides which

were used in the past and are harmful for the environment. We also have an active cooperation along the Academy of Sciences. Owing to assistance by NATO, the Republic of Moldova was among the first states which totally eliminated anti-personnel mines according to the Ottawa Convention of 1997. You see that benefits from this cooperation are obvious, and we strive to increase them. The Republic of Moldova views NATO as an organization which gives serious opportunities for developing the country both in the civilian and military fields. Units of the Moldovan Army take regular part in military exercises organized within the context of the «Partnership for Peace». Some officers take part in humanitarian actions of NATO. It is also important in this respect to indicate to the assistance of NATO experts to reform our National Army. We should also remember that strengthening of cooperation with NATO will have a positive impact on our European integration strive, because we consider the Plan of Actions between Moldova and the EU and the Individual partnership action plan with NATO as two mutually supplementing strategic documents.

Which coming events of this year do you think the most important for Moldova?

- **A. S.** It is rather difficult to identify a specific event. We can only note that, in assessment of foreign observers, the Moldovan foreign policy has become more active in the recent years, as well as more consistent and clear. We have achieved some results along strategic lines and will make every effort to multiply these achievements.

European integration, the process of resolution of the Trans-Dniester conflict, maintenance of active ties with traditional partners and development of relations with new partners as well as regional cooperation represent a rather broad range. Important events will occur along all these lines. They include very significant diplomatic activities, such as the summit of the heads of states planned for the 60th session of the UN General Assembly in mid September this year.

Questions were asked by Roman Yakovlevsky. 30.06.05.