



**UNITED STATES COMMISSION ON SECURITY AND COOPERATION IN EUROPE
(U.S. HELSINKI COMMISSION)**

Hearing on “Moldova: Access and Accountability”

Tuesday, March 10, 2020

12:30 p.m.

Room 2200, Rayburn House Office Building

Opening Statement of Helsinki Commission Co-Chairman Senator Roger Wicker

At the Helsinki Commission, we spend a great deal of time focusing on conflict and democracy among important geopolitical partners like Ukraine. However, it is important to give due consideration to other post-Soviet states like Moldova, especially as they continue to struggle in key areas of reform. I have followed the developments in the Moldovan parliament over the past year, and I hope this hearing brings further clarity to the role of the OSCE and the United States in helping Moldova overcome its challenges.

Moldova has found the United States a willing partner in its mission to modernize its economy and strengthen democratic institutions, including through agencies like the Millennium Challenge Corporation (MCC). The 2010 MCC compact provided technical assistance to Moldova’s government, resulting in critical healthcare sector and judicial reforms through better training and the creation of enforceable codes of conduct. Just like in the great state of Mississippi, workers in the agricultural sector are the backbone of Moldova’s economy. I am therefore pleased that the compact made it a priority to train farmers to cultivate high-value crops and reduce transport costs—resulting in higher incomes. These partnerships

have helped make life better for the nearly 3.4 million citizens of Moldova. But Moldova no longer meets the MCC “control of corruption” threshold and is unable to be considered for a subsequent compact at this time.

Corruption is the primary reason that Moldova is a “developing” country rather than developed. There was great hope in the West that Maia Sandu’s [MY-uh SAHN-doo] government would finally be the one to tackle corruption and address the problems stemming from oligarchic control of government and the media. Unfortunately, we were not given enough time to see that play out. Only five months into Sandu’s term, her government lost a vote of confidence and the Socialist Party came to power. It remains unclear whether the new government will confront corruption or, like the Democratic Party of Moldova, use it as a means to further personal and political ends.

Corruption in Moldova is therefore not just a structural problem, but a personal one that affects the political rights and freedoms of every citizen. I look forward to hearing how the United States, especially Congress, can play a role in assisting with these vital reforms in Moldova.