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Broad agenda for the Eastern Europe

On October 11th, EU ambassadors have agreed to recognize the European aspirations of Georgia, Moldova, and Ukraine, with a draft statement which will be officialized during the next month's Eastern Partnership (EaP) Summit that will be held in Brussels on November 24th. Ambassadors from the 28 European Union member states declared: "Summit participants acknowledge the European aspirations and the European choice of the partners concerned, as stated in the Association Agreements," referring to Georgia, Moldova, and Ukraine [Rikard Jozwiak, EU States Agree On 'Aspiration' Declaration About Ukraine, Georgia, Moldova, RadioFreeEuropeRadioLiberty, 11 October 2017]. These statements were preceded by the visit of the EU member states Ambassadors based in Brussels (EU Political and Security Committee) in Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia at the beginning of October, covering a broad spectre of issues were covered; including bilateral cooperation, multilateral cooperation with the Eastern Partnership as well as regional developments and reform efforts [EU Ambassadors show support to Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia, European Union External Action, 9 October 2017].

The Summit main purpose is to underline the progress made since the 2015 Summit in Riga and outline the directions of future cooperation between the EU and EaP states. The Summit will also involve discussions to strengthen cooperation in the priority areas agreed in Riga (economy, governance, society and connectivity). The Brussels Summit is the EaP's first since Georgia and Ukraine achieved visa liberalization, placing new hopes on a path that is leading to some concrete result. For the 5th Eastern Partnership Summit in Brussels, Foreign Affairs Committee Members of European Parliament (MEPs) recommend: advocate trust fund for Ukraine, Georgia and Moldova; suggest "EaP+" model offering Eastern partners access to customs or energy union; call for collective pressure on Russia to resolve conflicts in the EU eastern neighbourhood [Press Releases, Foreign Affairs Committee MEPs advocate trust fund for Eastern partners, European Parliament, 10 October 2017].

Georgia's foreign policy ambitions go far beyond the visa-free regime, with the country continuing to work toward eventual EU membership. Therefore, Georgia will have to push for the next phase of integration, which is the membership perspective. Georgia might be able to pursue functional integration, which involves sectoral cooperation for gradual and eventually full integration into the European Union. Ukraine is focused more on economic opportunities than on political gestures. The European Commission has already agreed to send Ukraine 600 million euros through the end of 2017. Moreover, the Lithuanian parliament recently proposed the New European Plan for Ukraine. If the labelled "Marshall Plan" for Ukraine was approved Kiev will receive at least €5 billion annually to implement the reforms. Moldova has gained a lot of benefits from the EU with little effort. Moldovan officials are more oriented toward proving effective implementation of reforms than on demanding

concrete steps toward future membership in the EU. The Moldovan government's top priority is to convince the country's citizens that closer ties with the EU are necessary [Mariam Grigalashvili, What Georgia, Moldova, and Ukraine Want From the Brussels Summit, Georgian Institute of Politics, September 2017].

Furthermore, their Foreign Ministers of the GUAM countries (Georgia, Ukraine, Azerbaijan, and Moldova) on Sunday 8th October in Tbilisi, at the special meeting for the 20th anniversary of the founding of GUAM, have signed a joint communiqué on their readiness to continue close cooperation. This area seems ready to embrace Western structures but has to demonstrate to be more aware of the internal difficulties and to be able to avoid the same mistakes made in the past. If these are the fundamental steps to get out from the "grey zone" of the Eastern Europe, it will be seen in the coming months when Russian countermeasures will begin to emerge.

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