

UKRAINE REFORM CONFERENCE, 06 JULY 2017

ESTONIA- STATEMENT BY ACTING UNDERSECRETARY FOR POLITICAL AFFAIRS, MR PAUL TEESALU



Ukraine's European integration is the best blueprint for reforms. We welcome two recent milestones on this path – entry into force of the visa free regime and finalisation of the ratification of EU-Ukraine Association Agreement. It shows that reforms do pay off in practice. We look forward to the upcoming EU-Ukraine Summit in Kyiv to celebrate the recent results of Ukraine's hard work.

Relations with Ukraine and Eastern Partnership as a whole are priority for the Estonian Presidency of the Council of the EU and we all need join our forces to ensure a successful Eastern Partnership Summit in November.

Ukraine has made considerable progress in the reform process. We would like to underline the importance of steps taken in the field of anti-corruption and judiciary, as they are the key aspects for successful reforms. Rule of law and professional and independent judicial system is the foundation for the whole reform process.

Rule of law is an important factor that can improve the economic situation. Only by minimising risks for corruption and functioning of the rule of law will facilitate doing business and help to attract foreign investments. Rooting out corruption is not just a question of dignity and economic development but also of resilience and national security.

A government is strong when it includes all stakeholders to the decision making process. In this regard, it is fundamental to work with civil society who are necessary partners for the Ukrainian government to fight against corruption and to advance the reform agenda.

Pushing through reforms while Crimea has been illegally annexed for more than three years and the Russian aggression is still ongoing is without a doubt difficult, but the best response to Russia's aggression is successful and reform-oriented Ukraine. Here I would like to reiterate our unwavering support to Ukraine's independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity.

Ukraine remains one of Estonia's priority partners in development cooperation. In 2015 and 2016 the Estonian aid to Ukraine reached 2.7 million EUR that is approximately 1/4 of the Estonian development and humanitarian aid. In 2011 we launched a special institution - the Estonian Centre for Eastern Partnership to enhance the co-operation and share our expertise with the Eastern Partnership countries and Ukraine in particular. The Centre is open to increase cooperation with counties and institutions present here today.

Estonia supports development of democracy and implementation of good governance that include activities contributing to reform processes, including e-Governance and implementation of ICT solutions in public administration, fight against corruption; business environment; educational system, including vocational education.

This year we continue to promote the use of ICT solutions for regional development and for socially vulnerable population. In particular, we support women's empowerment and projects for IDPs through entrepreneurship. Estonia also offers rehabilitation and treatment for Ukrainian soldiers in Estonia.

To conclude, it is true that reforms can be painful. We know that from our own experience. They can cost votes at the ballot box. But they do pay off in practice to the benefit of the people of Ukraine.