

It is with great pleasure that I greet President Viktor Yanukovich on his visit to Estonia.

Your visit comes at a time of breakthrough in relations between Ukraine and the European Union.

The broad consensus among Ukraine's politicians and parties in regard to integration with the European Union not only bolsters your hopes, but also the sense of certainty in Europe that your country's choices for the future are considered and represent the best path for Ukraine and its people.

Herein both Ukraine and the European Union must shoulder responsibility.

What we expect of Ukraine is confirmation of the kind of values the European Union is built on: freedom of speech; transparency and equal treatment in the administration of justice; transparency in the economy and in politics; a market economy with clear-cut rules; the rule of law. All of these things will benefit Ukraine as a state and as a society, and benefit all of your citizens.

The responsibility that the European Union must shoulder, in my view, lies in encouraging and supporting Ukraine in the implementation of European reforms, be they constitutional, in respect of the administration of justice or maintenance of law and order, in regard to new election laws or improving the business and investment environment.

Responsibility for ensuring that the European Union and the continent we share form a safe and successful neighbourhood is the reason why Estonia will be supporting the signing of an association and free trade agreement with Ukraine at the EU summit in Vilnius in November. We will not acquiesce to the intimidation and economic pressure exerted by third countries that is designed to make Ukraine, Moldova and Georgia rethink their future choices. The ways things are done on another continent – hangovers from another era – are alien to Estonia and Europe in the 21st century.

The free trade agreement will grant Ukraine access to the internal market of the European Union – the biggest and most stable in the world, with 500 million consumers. Moreover, the signing of the agreement will take place at a time when European economic growth is recovering and the United States is close to reaching an agreement with the European Union on a transatlantic free trade zone. As you can see, there is much at stake here.

The European Union is already a key trade partner to Ukraine: our share of the goods trade in the country is a third, and almost 80% of the investments made in Ukraine come from Europe.

The European Union is hopeful of Ukraine's support and cooperation in encouraging another Eastern Partnership state, Moldova, on its path towards integration with Europe. In particular this requires the active participation of Kyiv in unpicking the tangled situation in Transnistria.

Finally, let me reiterate what is already very clear: the history and culture of Ukraine form part of European history and culture, as Ukraine itself forms part of Europe.