

## ForMin Aureescu: Romania and Italy have constantly supported the importance of a strong, inclusive EU

**Romania and Italy have consistently supported the importance of a strong, inclusive European Union that is closer to its citizens, Romania's Foreign Minister Bogdan Aureescu said on Wednesday.**

The statement was made at a joint news conference with Italian Foreign Minister Luigi Di Maio during Aureescu's official visit to Rome.

"Romania and Italy have consistently supported the importance of a strong, inclusive union that is closer to its citizens, that ensures the security and prosperity of its citizens. We will continue to uphold these principles, including as part of the debates that will take place at the Conference on the future of Europe," said the head of the Romanian diplomacy is quotes as saying in a press statement released by the Romanian Foreign Ministry (MAE).

Aureescu reiterated Romania's objectives related to its accession to the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) and the Schengen area and thanked Italy for constant support to Romania in these files, which, in fact, Minister Di Maio reconfirmed during discussions.

The two ministers' consultations also reaffirmed that Romania and Italy support strengthening NATO's role and the deterrence and defence posture, including on the eastern flank.

The discussion also examined other issues of shared interest, such as developments in the Southern and Eastern Mediterranean Neighbourhood, EU-Turkey and EU-Russia relations, the EU Pact on Migration and Asylum.

Di Maio once again thanked Romania, during the consultations, for the solidarity shown by Romania last year in the first stage of the COVID-19 pandemic when sending a Romanian medical team to help Italian doctors in the fight against the novel coronavirus.

The Italian minister accepted an invitation from Aureescu to pay a visit to Romania in preparation for this year's joint government meeting.

"Despite the difficulties caused by the pandemic, our bilateral trade in 2020 neared over 13.8 billion euros in value, which is close to its all-time high of 2019, when we recorded 15.65 billion euros of trade. Italy remains thus, as Minister Di Maio said, Romania's second most important trading partner," said Aureescu.

He also mentioned the very important role of the Romanian community in Italy.

"It is the largest foreign community in Italy, the largest Romanian community outside the country, with an official count in excess of 1.1 million people. This community is an important link between our countries, to which we want to continue to attach special attention and that we want to develop continually. In recent years, the Romanian community has become increasingly better integrated with the Italian society," said Aureescu.

Aureescu pointed out that Romania and Italy are both supporting a strong transatlantic relationship.

"Therefore, we also discussed our close co-operation within NATO and thanked Italy for its support on the eastern flank, for NATO's deterrence and defence effort, for the deployment of the reinforced air policing in Romania, in the airspace of Romania, as well as for the affiliation of an Italian military unit to the Multinational Brigade in Craiova and for the participation in the other NATO bodies located in Romania," said Aureescu.