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**STATEMENT BY
THE EUROPEAN UNION AT THE 1452nd MEETING OF THE
OSCE PERMANENT COUNCIL**

23 November 2023

**In response to the report by the Head of the OSCE Mission to Moldova,
Ambassador Kelly Keiderling**

The European Union thanks the Head of the OSCE Mission to Moldova, Ambassador Kelly Keiderling, for her report.

As the Republic of Moldova continues to suffer from the repercussions of Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine, it is more important than ever that the Mission should continue, professionally and impartially, to carry out its monitoring activities and publish its reports. We also appreciate the Mission's wide-ranging efforts to maintain dialogue between the two banks of the Dniester/Nistru River, its activities in the politico-military sphere and the projects it implements, while taking care to ensure gender equality in all its activities.

Given that, in accordance with Decision No. 18/06 of the OSCE Ministerial Council meeting in Brussels, the Mission's mandate should be of a one-year duration, we urge Russia to join the consensus for a return to this practice. Likewise, Mission members must be able to move around freely so as to carry out their mandate, as stipulated in the rules established by the Joint Control Commission in the Security Zone.

The European Union recognizes the European outlook of the Republic of Moldova and its status as a candidate country. We welcome and fully support the Government's strong commitment to reform. In its report published on 8 November, the European Commission considers that the Republic of Moldova has undertaken major reform efforts and recommends that the Council open accession negotiations.

The European Union and its Member States stand by the Republic of Moldova more than ever. We continue to strongly support the reform measures taken by the Republic of Moldova on its path to European Union membership, be it in the framework of the Association Agreement, the Eastern Partnership, the European Political Community, the European Union Partnership Mission in the Republic of Moldova, the visa exemption regime or the assistance provided in dealing with the grave consequences of Russia's war against Ukraine. In this respect, we welcome the fourth ministerial conference of the Moldova Support Platform, held in Chişinău on 17 October and co-chaired by France, Germany and Romania.

The European Union reaffirms its support for a peaceful, comprehensive and sustainable settlement of the Transdnestrian conflict on the basis of respect for the territorial integrity and sovereignty of the Republic of Moldova within its internationally recognized borders, with a special status for Transdnestria.

In the absence of meetings in the “5+2” format, which are impossible to hold given Russia’s war of aggression against Ukraine, the European Union welcomes the continued discussions among the chief negotiators and within the working groups aimed at finding specific solutions to the challenges faced by the population on both banks of the Nistru/Dniester, which have been exacerbated by the Russian aggression. We encourage the authorities in Chişinău and Tiraspol to maintain their dialogue. It is vital that all parties in the “5+2” format continue to respect the sovereignty and territorial integrity of the Republic of Moldova.

The European Union condemns all attempts by Russia and its proxies to destabilize the country, including in the form of cyberattacks and disinformation campaigns and in connection with the local elections on 5 and 19 November. In this context, we take note of the preliminary conclusions of the election observation mission deployed by the Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR) and invite the authorities of the Republic of Moldova to continue their co-operation with the OSCE in this matter.

The European Union remains committed to respect for human rights and to the full implementation of the package of confidence-building measures, including the measures regarding Latin-script schools in the Transdnestrian region. We reiterate our concerns over the alarming human rights situation in the Transdnestrian region and urge the authorities in Tiraspol to release all political prisoners and stop persecuting and obstructing the freedom of movement and expression of human rights promoters, political activists and journalists.

We regret the absence of progress on the complete and unconditional withdrawal of Russian military forces and equipment from the territory of the Republic of Moldova, which refers to the Operative Group of Russian Forces, as well as the lack of transparency over Russian troop movements. In the current context, it is more crucial than ever to complete the processes initiated as part of the commitments undertaken at the OSCE Istanbul Summit in 1999, which envisage the withdrawal by Russia of its military forces and equipment stationed on Moldovan territory without the host country’s consent.

In view of the heightened risk posed by weapons and ammunition depots, in particular by the one in Cobasna, we recall the international commitments undertaken by Russia to destroy the munitions in that depot and urge it to carry out this operation without further delay. We should like to point out in this regard that the OSCE has a mandate and the means to contribute to the withdrawal or destruction of Russian ammunition and armaments from the Transdnestrian region, and that its involvement is essential to the transparency and international verification of such operations.

The European Union will continue to support the OSCE Mission to Moldova, just as it supports the reforms of the Government of the Republic of Moldova, which are beneficial to all the country’s citizens.

In conclusion, we wish Ambassador Keiderling and her capable team every success in their future activities.

The candidate countries North Macedonia¹, Montenegro¹, Albania¹, Ukraine, the Republic of Moldova and Bosnia and Herzegovina¹, the potential candidate country Georgia, and the European Free Trade Association countries and members of the European Economic Area Iceland and Liechtenstein align themselves with this statement.

1 North Macedonia, Montenegro, Albania and Bosnia and Herzegovina continue to be part of the Stabilisation and Association Process.