



## United States Mission to the OSCE

### **Response to the Report by the Head of the OSCE Mission to Moldova, Ambassador Claus Neukirch**

As delivered by Chargé d'Affaires Courtney Austrian  
to the Permanent Council, Vienna  
December 9, 2021

Thank you, Madam Chair.

The United States applauds the work of the OSCE Mission to Moldova and thanks you, Ambassador Neukirch, for this detailed report. We value the efforts of the Swedish Chairpersonship and Special Representative Mayr-Harting to move the 5+2 Transnistrian Settlement Process forward. The 2021 Ministerial Statement on the settlement process reflects the commitment of all participating States to help the sides resolve this long-standing conflict. We welcome the two sides working together to mitigate the worst effects of the Covid-19 pandemic.

We encourage Russia to respond positively to the Mission's readiness to support the transparent removal and disposal of munitions from the Cobasna weapons depot in line with the mandate entrusted to the Mission by all 57 participating States. An OSCE-facilitated inventory of the munitions by multinational experts would provide useful transparency and reassurance. We also call upon Russia to fulfill the pledge it made at the 1999 Istanbul OSCE Summit to withdraw its forces from Moldova.

We are pleased that regular 1+1 and working group meetings have continued to take place and that the mediators and observers visited the region in June. Maintaining open lines of communication remains crucial. We hope that a 5+2 meeting can be convened in early 2022.

We also encourage the Sides to continue to implement outstanding Berlin plus protocols and to commence discussion of core political and security issues in the third basket of the agreed 5+2 agenda.

Madam Chair, we applaud Moldova for the conduct of its early parliamentary elections on July 11. ODIHR assessed these to be "well administered, competitive, in which fundamental freedoms were largely respected." We note Moldova's efforts to implement several recommendations from ODIHR and the Council of Europe's Venice Commission and encourage the parliament to make progress on adopting the remaining recommendations on electoral legislation and processes.

We welcome the Mission's efforts to increase access to information on the electoral process and participation of women in the Autonomous Territorial Unit of Gagauzia. We encourage constructive cooperation with regional authorities in Gagauzia and further efforts to improve opportunities for all Moldovans. The re-establishment of the Parliamentary Working Group on Gagauzia is a crucial step.

Respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms is also central to an inclusive, democratic, and just society. We value the Mission's dialogue with de facto authorities in Tiraspol regarding

individual cases and call for the immediate release of all those unjustly detained for exercising their human rights and for timely resolutions to those cases. We were pleased to learn of the release of Ghenadie Ciorba in August, and we call on de facto Transnistrian authorities to drop all associated arbitrary charges against him.

We were also pleased that the Mission obtained access to visit Oleg Horjan with an OSCE doctor. Nevertheless, we remain concerned about his health and that of fellow political prisoner Serghei Mirovich as they announced going on hunger strikes last month. We reiterate our call for access to places of detention by international organizations and human rights NGOs. Restrictions on the freedom of association enacted by de facto authorities, including ongoing harassment of the NGO Apriori, also concern us.

We support the Mission's efforts to help Moldova implement the national strategy for the consolidation of inter-ethnic relations and to promote best practices in multilingual education. We also value the Mission's efforts to support Holocaust remembrance. The United States encourages Moldova to address hate-based crimes in line with its OSCE commitments and international standards. We also encourage Moldova to promote a pluralistic media space. The United States supports Moldova's anti-corruption and justice sector reforms and encourages the country to take advantage of all the OSCE has to offer on these matters.

Finally, we support the Mission's efforts to advance the Women, Peace, and Security agenda to the benefit and well-being of all Moldovans. Countering gender-based violence is imperative for a secure, just society.

In conclusion, the United States continues to support a sovereign, democratic Moldova, firmly anchored in Europe, secure within its internationally-recognized borders, and enjoying the benefits of effective, accountable government. Thank you, Ambassador Neukirch and your team, for your service.

Thank you, Madam Chair.

###