

Delegation of the Russian Federation

**STATEMENT BY MR. ALEXANDER LUKASHEVICH,
PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION,
AT THE 1119th MEETING OF THE
OSCE PERMANENT COUNCIL**

17 November 2016

In response to the report by the Head of the OSCE Mission to Moldova

Mr. Chairperson,

We thank Ambassador Michael Scanlan for his detailed analysis of the current situation regarding the settlement of the conflict in Transdnistria and his report on the activities of the OSCE Mission to Moldova headed by him.

The President of Russia, Mr. Vladimir Putin, congratulated the new President of Moldova, the leader of the Party of Socialists Mr. Igor Dodon, on his victory in the elections and wished him every success in this responsible position. I would emphasize that the results of the vote attest to the broad support among the electorate for Mr. Dodon's policy for the achievement of socio-economic stability in the country and the development of balanced foreign policy priorities.

According to international observers (in particular, under the auspices of the Interparliamentary Assembly of the Commonwealth of Independent States), the presidential elections in the Republic of Moldova were held in accordance with the Constitution and Electoral Code of the Republic. The process and results of the election campaign were recognized as free, competitive and in line with the accepted standards for democratic elections. The insignificant irregularities noted by the observers did not have a serious impact on the expression of the will of the electorate.

Despite the notable polarization of views in society regarding Moldova's future, which the election once again demonstrated, the citizens of the country showed a high degree of responsibility in the face of the difficult tasks confronting Moldova at the present time. In that connection, it is encouraging to note the unifying themes that the new Head of State clearly outlined in his very first post-election speech, his declared wish to be president for all Moldovans and his desire to take into account the views not only of his supporters but also of his opponents. Now it is important that this attitude be supported by society itself.

We hope that Mr. Dodon's campaign promises to help strengthen Moldova's statehood and sovereignty, inter-ethnic harmony and non-aligned status, and economic stability will be realized.

We agree with the assessment that the holding of the first official meeting after a two-year break of the Permanent Conference on Political Issues within the Framework of the Negotiation Process for the Transdniestrian Settlement in Berlin on 2 and 3 June was a key event this year. We share the view that the sincere interest demonstrated by the format participants helped to ensure the success of the negotiations. We note once again with satisfaction the enterprising and systematic policy of the German Chairmanship to encourage this attitude by the conflicting parties on the basis of the Russian delegation's proposals for a normalization of the work of the "5+2" format.

The task of intensifying the negotiation process and making dialogue among the parties sustainable, dynamic and productive has lost none of its relevance. It is evident that the implementation in good faith of the agreements set out in the Berlin Protocol, including on the problem of politically-motivated criminal prosecution, is of fundamental importance in this context. There are for now obvious problems regarding the disciplined implementation of the steps agreed upon in Berlin. We firmly believe that the implementation of decisions approved in principle on social questions of importance to the population on both banks of the Dniester is a key indicator of the parties' genuine interest in finding a mutually acceptable framework for making progress towards a political settlement. The draft agreement submitted by the Russian delegation during the Berlin meeting on an implementation mechanism for agreements reached within the "5+2" format is designed to improve precisely this component of the negotiation process. We hope that the authorities in Chişinău and Tiraspol will take a responsible approach to work on this agreement.

The unilateral approach aimed at restricting foreign economic activity by businesses and the freedom of movement of the population of Transdniestria remains a serious impediment to the negotiations. The claim that there is no alternative to European integration for the development of Moldova, which, as the results of the presidential elections on 13 November have shown, is not a matter of consensus even on the right bank of the Dniester, also does not make it easier to find common ground between the conflicting parties. Coupled with clearly provocative actions like the demonstration of NATO (or to be more precise United States) military equipment in May 2016 on the eve of Victory Day, a day that is sacred to the overwhelming majority of people in Moldova, and irresponsible statements by some representatives of the politico-military leadership regarding the prospects for membership of the Alliance – all this undermines international efforts to facilitate a Transdniestrian settlement. Unfortunately, these facts, which have a direct impact on the prospects for a settlement of the conflict, were not reflected in the report by the Head of the OSCE Mission.

As for the exercises involving the Operational Group of Russian Forces in Transdniestria mentioned by Ambassador Scanlan, exhaustive explanations have already been provided. The exercises had a clear anti-terrorist thrust.

We support the programme and project activities of the OSCE Mission to the extent that they are in line with the central task of the field presence in facilitating a Transdniestrian settlement. We believe it important to avoid an unjustified focus on humanitarian issues.

In conclusion, we should like once again to confirm that Russia's principled policy regarding the settlement of the conflict in Transnistria remains consistent. We continue to play a mediating role in the negotiations and act as a guarantor for the agreements reached in the unique and generally recognized "5+2" format. We are keen to see an end to the persisting mistrust between the authorities in Chişinău and Tiraspol. The responsibility for achieving agreements that are acceptable to Moldova and Transnistria lies above all with the parties to the conflict themselves. We are ready to continue to facilitate this in close co-ordination with the OSCE Chairmanship and the other participants in the "5+2" process with a view to advancing negotiations to find a sustainable, just and comprehensive settlement to the Transnistrian problem.

We wish Ambassador Scanlan and the Mission staff further success in their difficult work.

Thank you for your attention.