

Delegation of the Russian Federation

**STATEMENT BY MR. ALEXANDER LUKASHEVICH,  
PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION,  
AT THE 1192<sup>nd</sup> MEETING OF THE  
OSCE PERMANENT COUNCIL**

12 July 2018

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

Mr. Chairperson,

We thank the distinguished Ambassador Michael Scanlan for his detailed report.

It is a fact that a certain amount of progress has been achieved over the past few years in the dialogue between the authorities in Chişinău and Tiraspol to resolve the critical social problems faced by the region's population.

The agreements reached on 29 and 30 May in Rome at the meeting of the Permanent Conference on Political Issues in the Framework of the Negotiation Process for the Transdniestrian Settlement confirm that it is quite realistic to reach compromises on socio-humanitarian problems that are of vital importance to the population provided that there is a genuine interest by the parties. The tactic of "small steps" has proved to be fully warranted. We agree with the assessment that there is a need to create an atmosphere of trust between the parties and, in this way, the necessary conditions for progress to be made in resolving the Transdniestrian problem.

This is due mainly to the authorities in Tiraspol, who have demonstrated their sincere interest in removing barriers with the right bank of the Dniester. It was the Transdniestrian initiative regarding the resumption of vehicle traffic on the Gura Bîcului-Bychok bridge in 2017 that provided stimulus to the bilateral dialogue with Moldova. The impulse given by the authorities in Tiraspol to advancing by "small steps" should be backed by reciprocal concessions by the authorities in Chişinău.

In spite of all temptations, we should not get ahead of ourselves. As the distinguished Ambassador Scanlan confirms, to date many decisions have been implemented only in part and with a failure to observe the foreseen deadlines. There is a need to consider how the agreements will be implemented in practice.

It is important to remember that legislative restrictions still exist in Moldova in the search for mutually acceptable outcomes with the authorities in Tiraspol. On 22 July it will be

thirteen years since the adoption by the Moldovan Parliament of the Law on the Basic Provisions of the Special Status of Settlements on the Left Bank of the Dniester (Transdnistria). This law is still in force. Under these circumstances, there is nothing to stop the courts from declaring decisions adopted recently to be illegal, should the political situation warrant it.

We believe it to be important for the compromises that have been reached to be made official, permanent and non-reversible. Following on from the agreements confirmed in Rome, a mechanism needs to be elaborated for incorporating the agreements reached in the “5+2” format in the national legislation. Russia and Transdnistria have presented their proposals in this regard. We await a reaction from Moldova and other partners. It was agreed in the “5+2” format that practical results in this area should be achieved by the end of this year. It is about time to discuss this question in substance.

It is strange to say the least, given the progress that some hasten to call “unprecedented”, that the authorities in Chişinău are attempting to maintain and in some cases increase the pressure on Transdnistrians. Transdnistrian politicians and business people continue to be prosecuted for politically motivated reasons. It is well known that the authorities in Tiraspol are concerned by the systematic tightening of customs controls by Moldova together with Ukraine on the Transdnistrian part of the border. This is already causing new problems. The obstacles to the delivery of fuel products to Transdnistria have not been eliminated. There are serious differences as to the agreement of lists of imported medical supplies of vital importance to the inhabitants of the left bank of the Dniester. To justify its unilateral restrictions, the Moldovan leadership frequently makes reference to its own international commitments, in particular to the agreement on the European Union-Moldova Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Area, which was concluded without consultations with the authorities in Tiraspol and fails to take account of the exemptions due to the special status of Transdnistria supported by all 57 OSCE participating States.

We cannot agree with the opinion of Ambassador Scanlan on progress in the creation in Moldova of an inclusive and tolerant society. We have repeatedly pointed out the restrictions on language rights in the country and the practice of expelling Russian-language media from Moldova. It is unlikely that this policy will be conducive to creating a positive atmosphere for settling the fundamental conflicts with the mainly Russian-speaking Transdnistria.

The adoption by the United Nations General Assembly of the resolution, submitted on the initiative of Moldova with several co-sponsors, on the “Complete and unconditional withdrawal of foreign military forces from the territory of the Republic of Moldova” has been extremely destructive. The document is at odds with Moldova’s declared policy for a settlement of the Transdnistrian conflict and contravenes international agreements. At the moment the necessary conditions are not in place for the withdrawal from Transdnistria of the Operational Group of Russian Forces (OGRF), which is responsible for safeguarding the stockpiles of ammunition in the region left in Colbasna from Soviet times.

It should be pointed out that in this case as well the authorities in Chişinău disregarded the opinion of those in Tiraspol, who quite rightly saw this step by Moldova as being aimed at destroying the tried-and-tested peacekeeping format with a view to ousting the Russian peacekeeping presence. Russia is the guarantor of peace and stability in the region. It was Russian forces that stopped the bloodshed there in 1992. It is extremely regrettable that

among the supporters of the Moldovan draft UN General Assembly resolution were many OSCE participating States, who must have realized that the document compromises the Transnistrian settlement process and undermines the Organization's role in it. Moreover, at Moldova's instigation the corresponding passages were repeated in the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly resolution in Berlin.

Russia is committed to the strict fulfilment by its military contingent of the mandate and tasks of the joint peacekeeping operation on the Dniester, which creates the necessary conditions for continuing dialogue between Moldova and Transnistria.

With regard to the information mentioned by Ambassador Scanlan on the movement of Russian forces and equipment on the left bank on 14 June, we would recall that the Russian delegation provided the relevant explanations at the meeting of the Joint Control Commission (JCC). The measures were called for on account of the need to strengthen the security of the depots in Colbasna as a result of intelligence information concerning the possibility of provocations and terrorist acts directed at Russian facilities at the time. The Joint Military Command and JCC were informed of the movement of military equipment on 23 June. Thus the picture painted by Ambassador Scanlan is – to put it mildly – skewed.

We are astonished to note the information about the OSCE Mission's patrol of the territory of Transnistria. There is no mention of this in the field operation's mandate. We urge the leaders of the OSCE Secretariat to ensure in future that the OSCE Mission does not overstep its agreed mandate. We also find it unacceptable that the OSCE Mission should observe the exercises of the OGRF in Transnistria. By the way, the OSCE Mission did not observe the joint Moldova-NATO exercises in 2016 that took place near the security zone. If the Mission has surplus funds that it uses for unauthorized activity, we shall take this into account when adopting the unified budget for OSCE field operations for the next year.

In principle, we confirm the unchanged approach to the peaceful settlement of the conflict in Transnistria. We are convinced that responsibility for the achievement of mutually acceptable agreements lies first and foremost with the parties to the conflict themselves. We are willing to continue to assist them in close co-ordination with the OSCE Chairmanship and other participants in the "5+2" process on a systematic and regular basis.