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United States Mission to the OSCE

Response to Minister of Foreign Affairs of Moldova, H.E. Natalia Gherman

As delivered by Ambassador Daniel B. Baer
to the Permanent Council, Vienna
May 8, 2014

The United States warmly welcomes back Her Excellency Natalia Gherman, Minister of Foreign Affairs of Moldova, to the OSCE Permanent Council. Moldova is an important partner of the United States. We have a strong history of cooperation based on shared values and common interests.

Madame Minister, in this stressful time for your region, the OSCE Mission to Moldova has an important role to play in supporting Moldova's reform program and in providing unbiased reporting on the political and security situation, including in the Transnistrian region. We fully share your view that the Mission must have unrestricted access to all of Moldova to perform its activities, including the conduct of observation patrols. The restrictions placed on the Mission to Moldova undermine its ability to implement its mandate and undermine the ability of members of the OSCE to assess the situation on the ground and its potential impact. The United States encourages all those concerned to remove these restrictions and allow the Mission to resume all activities provided for in its mandate.

The United States strongly supports the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Moldova with a special status for Transnistria and the right of Moldovans to choose their own future. Those choices must include your right to decide whether to allow foreign forces on your territory, and to have that choice respected by your neighbors. We were disappointed that the last round of 5+2 Talks was postponed. We encourage the parties to take advantage of the new date planned for June 5 and 6, and call on all the parties to avoid taking any unilateral actions that can further disrupt this important process. We agree that it is past time to begin discussions of core political and security issues in the third basket of the agreed 5+2 agenda. These central issues have languished long enough. Transnistrian restrictions on movement by the OSCE Mission underscore that these core issues must be addressed, and that there is nothing to be gained by further delay.

Your Excellency, the United States strongly supports the trajectory that Moldova has chosen in strengthening its relationship with Europe. We welcome the steps you will take this year when all Moldovans including those in Transnistria and Gagauzia will benefit from visa-free travel to Europe, and when they will benefit from trade preferences and are able to grow their businesses and enjoy prosperity.

The United States remains committed to supporting Moldova as it pursues its reforms and path to European integration. We are working together to further strengthen rule of law and combat corruption. We are working to increase trade and investment – in both directions. The strength of our relations is affirmed by our recent launch of a program through the Defense Threat Reduction Agency (DTRA) to provide equipment and training to Moldova's

Border Guards and Customs Service. Indeed, in 2013 alone, the U.S. provided over \$22 million in assistance to Moldova to support non-proliferation initiatives, as well as reforms to build a strong democratic, just, and prosperous society, which are key to Moldova's European integration.

The United States values the OSCE Mission to Moldova's efforts to facilitate the settlement process and to support Moldova on its reform path. We welcome the Mission's efforts to promote the recommendations of the High Commissioner on National Minorities in the 2012 report on "Moldovan-Administered, Latin-Script Schools in Transnistria." We also welcome the Mission's activities to promote confidence building on both sides of the Dniestr/Nistru River through the Civil Society Forum, to support democratic reforms, and to help Moldova combat trafficking in human beings.

We do not see Moldova's future as a "zero sum game." We see a future for Moldova where it has equally strong relations with Europe, with Ukraine, with Russia, and with other countries. We see a future for Moldova where it is a bridge of trade and commerce and education, linking Europe and Russia and Ukraine, and providing a better future not only for Moldovans, but for people throughout the region.

Madame Minister, we look forward to timely, concrete and peaceful actions to resolve the Transnistrian conflict. We value Moldova's relationship with the OSCE and hope your appearance here today will further advance these relations.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.