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## **STATEMENT BY THE EUROPEAN UNION AT THE 1139th MEETING OF THE OSCE PERMANENT COUNCIL**

30 March 2017

### **In response to the report by the Head of the OSCE Mission to the Republic of Moldova, Ambassador Michael Scanlan**

The European Union thanks Ambassador Michael Scanlan for his sixth report to the Permanent Council.

The EU supports a peaceful and comprehensive settlement of the Transdniestrian 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 the Transdniestrian region. As underlined in the Ministerial Statement adopted in Hamburg, we support the outcome-based negotiations, which must be maintained in the “5+2” format.

We appreciate the excellent work carried out by the Mission and Mr. Scanlan. We also welcome the strong commitment of the Special Representative of the OSCE Chairperson-in-Office for the Transdniestrian Settlement Process, Ambassador Wolf-Dietrich Heim, to the settlement of the conflict, which is a continuation of that shown by the German Chairmanship.

In November 2016, we fully supported the initiative taken by Moldova to present a document on a special status for the Transdniestrian region. Like the OSCE Chairmanship-in-Office, we call on the Moldovan authorities to make rapid progress in that direction. We welcome the decision of the President of the Republic of Moldova, the Prime Minister and the President of the Parliament and the announcement in February that they would work towards a common position on the settlement of the conflict, which is essential for the negotiations. As has been pointed out, 2017 is a unique “window of opportunity” that must be used.

However, we regret to note that four measures of the Berlin Protocol of June 2016 have not yet been implemented. We also regret that the parties have not yet reached agreement on the important and long-standing issues of schools that use Latin script in the Transdniestrian region, access to farmland in Dubăsari, freedom of movement for persons, goods and services and the Gura Bîcului-Bîcioc bridge. We hope that progress will be made on each of these eight measures as soon as possible. We thank Germany for its willingness to organize an informal conference in Bavaria and hope that a meeting in the “5+2” format can be held immediately afterwards.

The continuation and completion of the discussions would greatly benefit the daily life of the population. We expect the resumption of the negotiations in the “5+2” format to lead to tangible progress in the three baskets, in particular in the political, institutional and security aspects of the third basket. The withdrawal of the remaining forces of the Russian army from Moldova is also an important issue that needs to be resolved.

In order to completely fulfil their mandate and contribute effectively to the creation of the conditions necessary for a peaceful settlement of the conflict, members of the Mission need full and unhindered access to the entire territory of Moldova, including the Transnistrian region.

We reiterate our commitment to strengthening the status of Gagauzia as an autonomous territorial unit. In this context, we call for the adoption of the amendments proposed by the Permanent Working Group on Co-operation between the Parliament of the Republic of Moldova and the People’s Assembly of Gagauzia so that the 1994 Law on the Special Legal Autonomous Status of Gagauzia can be applied.

We welcome the adoption of the Strategy for the Consolidation of Inter-Ethnic Relations in December 2016, which was formulated with the support of the Office of the High Commissioner on National Minorities. We encourage the development of an action plan to guide its implementation.

We also congratulate the Government of Moldova on the adoption of the Action Plan to Promote Holocaust Remembrance and Education and on its initiative to establish a Museum of Jewish History.

The EU calls on the Moldovan authorities to take account of all the recommendations made by the Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights in its final report on the 2016 presidential election. The draft reform of the method of electing Members of Parliament proposed on 14 March raises concerns. Any electoral reform should aim at strengthening democratic principles and it is important to seek consensus on the subject with opposition political parties.

We recall that freedom of the media is a key element of democratic life and urge the Government of Moldova to improve the national legislation in order to limit the concentration of media ownership and ensure pluralism. In that context, we encourage the Mission to continue its co-operation with the Office of the OSCE Representative on Freedom of the Media.

In conclusion, the EU reaffirms its commitment to strengthening its political association and economic integration with Moldova under the Association Agreement, and calls on Moldova to continue implementing the reforms under the Agreement.

The candidate countries the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia<sup>1</sup>, Montenegro<sup>1</sup> and Albania<sup>1</sup>, the country of the Stabilisation and Association Process and potential candidate Bosnia and Herzegovina, the Free Trade Association countries and members of the European Economic Area Liechtenstein and Norway, as well as Georgia, align themselves with this statement.

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1 The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Montenegro and Albania continue to be part of the Stabilisation and Association Process.