



PERMANENT DELEGATION
OF THE REPUBLIC OF MOLDOVA
TO THE OSCE

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**Address by H.E. Ms. Natalia Gherman, Deputy Prime-minister, Minister of Foreign
Affairs and European Integration of the Republic of Moldova**

999th Meeting of the Permanent Council

8 May 2014

Mr. Chairperson,
Excellences,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

First of all, I am delighted to be back to the Permanent Council, to the Neuer Saal, since I spent many years of my diplomatic carrier working with this Organization.

Let me start with a couple of general thoughts on where we stand. It would not be an exaggeration to state that these days the OSCE community is passing through a period of deep mistrust among its members. Spirit of co-operation and mutual understanding is affected by political confrontation. New dividing lines are emerging. This is undermining the OSCE and it is detrimental to the concept of security community that we all agreed to in Astana. But crisis situations show not only the weaknesses of multilateral instruments. They could also mobilize collective thinking aimed at improving the existing international security mechanisms.

I would highlight three basic qualities of this Organization that need to be preserved and strengthened despite the existing challenges. **First** – the OSCE should continue to serve as a key platform for dialogue even in most critical situations. **Second** – the OSCE norms, principles and commitments have no alternative and should continue to govern relations between participating states. **Third** – Crisis-diplomacy is on high demand and the OSCE should be continuously involved in providing peaceful response to resolve such situations. That is why Moldova is firmly supporting consolidation of the OSCE role and capacities in the sphere of crisis management and conflict resolution.

Mr. Chairperson,

Situation in Ukraine is on everybody's mind these days. The political, territorial and military implications of this crisis have shaken the very foundations of international law, as well as questioned the nature of political partnership and security in Europe. I am sure that scholars will dedicate significant efforts to analyze the causes and impact of the current crisis, but our common task today is to help find a peaceful solution. Let me make a couple of points on matters of principle.

We firmly believe that **preserving the territorial integrity and sovereignty of Ukraine** within its internationally recognized borders is the *red line* that cannot be crossed while we are looking for solutions of the crisis. Moldova did not recognize the so-called referendum in Crimea or its consequences.

In Ukrainian **domestic politics** – a crucial importance should be attached to holding an inclusive dialogue among political actors representing all parts of the country and acting within the legal and constitutional frameworks. We hope that the Presidential elections scheduled for 25 May will take place in a calm and peaceful environment and will contribute to the normalization of the situation.

With regard to the **military and security** aspects – we underscore the need for urgent actions aimed at de-escalating the situation in and around Ukraine. International tools, such as those provided by the Vienna Document 2011 on CSBMs, should be applied to its full potential and all international commitments related to military transparency and predictability should be honoured.

To sum up – a genuine dialogue, international assistance and mediation, as well as good will from all players involved are key prerequisites to resolve the crisis. It is up to Ukrainian people only to decide about the future of their country, as well as about the nature of political and administrative reforms in the country. International community's role is to provide assistance in creating appropriate conditions. In this respect, we add our voice to the appeals for full implementation of the **Geneva statement** of 17 April 2014 by all relevant players. We also strongly support the activity of the **OSCE Special Monitoring Mission to Ukraine** to which Moldova has also seconded its representatives.

Mr. Chairperson,

Moldova has sufficient reasons to be worried about the ongoing crisis in Ukraine and possible spillover effect. In this sense, the **unresolved Transnistrian conflict** remains our main source of concern. Regretfully, the conflict resolution process has not been registering substantive progress in recent months. Moreover, increasing number of unilateral actions has undermined the fragile trust and brought much more confrontation into the dialogue between Chisinau and Tiraspol. Let me go through main elements of the process.

The **5+2 format** is the main venue of political negotiations on Transnistrian conflict resolution. Currently, there is a certain delay in holding of the negotiations rounds due to conditions put forward by the Transnistrian region. Our position on 5+2 talks was clear – if Tiraspol wants to make a point or raise a concern – it is better to do it at the negotiation table, rather than by challenging the negotiations themselves. We hope that there will be no new preconditions and the next 5+2 round will take place in early June this year.

Touching upon the substance of the 5+2 negotiations I would like to reiterate our longstanding call to **open talks on the political and security aspects of the conflict**. It is our firm belief that progress can be achieved if the dialogue is moving in parallel on all three baskets of the negotiation agenda. During last couple of years the efforts focused on resolving certain problems in areas like transportation, trade, banking and telecommunications. This approach has been referred to as “the tactic of small steps” and it was applied so far only to the social-economic sphere. But it has become obvious now that little progress can be made

on technical issues without having at least a general understanding of what is the shared political end-goal. So, why not extending the “small steps” approach to political and security issues? Let me be clear – we do not have to start talking about the status of the Transnistrian region immediately after opening the so-called “third basket”. Talks on comprehensive political settlement require thorough preparation. In the meantime, we could start dealing with certain political and security aspects that would improve confidence between sides and outline political framework for solutions.

Mr. Chairperson,

A few remarks on the increased risk of tensions in certain areas. On a general note – we have a strong feeling that Tiraspol is reopening some of the old problems and is returning to the previous tactic of applying targeted pressure on the elements of the Moldovan presence in the Transnistrian region. Here are some details.

The situation in the Security Zone remains generally stable but fragile. At the same time, the infrastructure of the Transnistrian checkpoints is constantly upgraded. Moldovan police unit deployed in the town of Bender in accordance with the existing arrangements is under continuous pressure. The deployment of military observers to register and report about incidents is regularly blocked by Tiraspol. Moreover, in February the Transnistrian “militia” detained few Moldovan peacekeepers which is an unacceptable treatment of peacekeeping personnel. There are enough reasons for concern. We are committed to resolve the emerging problems within the existing mechanisms – such as the Joint Control Commission. However, permanent blockages in the work of this body remind us about the need to reflect on the transformation of the current operation into a multinational civilian mission under an international mandate.

Another pressing issue is the **situation around Moldovan Latin-script schools** which are currently operating in a much more uncertain environment. Basically, the schools are under the risk to be closed down if they do not comply with local financial and other regulations. Chisinau is ready to work on long-term solutions that would not interfere with the educational process in Latin-script schools. No unilateral action should be taken towards those schools while dialogue is underway within the relevant Working Group of the negotiation mechanism.

This spring we are confronted again with **the situation when farmers from Dorotskaya** village are denied access to their land situated beyond the administrative line. In 2004-2005 similar problems generated significant tensions in the Security Zone. The Transnistrian side unilaterally declared as non-functional the mechanism that was agreed back in 2006 with the assistance of the OSCE, Russian Federation and Ukraine. Now, Tiraspol is insisting on options that put under question the land-ownership rights of the farmers. Despite our flexibility, the negotiations on this issue have not produced yet any significant result and as a consequence the agricultural season has already been lost.

All issues mentioned above require constant and careful attention of the international partners involved in the conflict resolution process. The **OSCE Mission to Moldova has proved to be an efficient instrument** in providing neutral monitoring, advice and mediation. Therefore, the Mission should have free and unimpeded access throughout the entire territory of Moldova, including in the Transnistrian region and the stockpiles of conventional

ammunitions in Cobasna. We call on all relevant actors within the 5+2 format to contribute to restoring the OSCE Mission's capability to fully implement its mandate, which was agreed by all of us here at the OSCE.

Mr. Chairperson,

I would also like to reiterate our longstanding position regarding the need to **finalize the withdrawal of ammunition stockpiles from Cobasna** and remaining Russian forces from the territory of the Republic of Moldova in accordance with the relevant international commitments. We also consider that efforts towards modernization or build-up of this military presence would not contribute to security in the region and, therefore, are not welcomed.

Summing up the Transnistrian "chapter" of my statement, let me point out that **the strategic goal of the Republic of Moldova** is to achieve lasting political settlement of the conflict based on the respect for sovereignty and territorial integrity of the Republic of Moldova. The Transnistrian region should have a special status within the reintegrated country. This would enable the region with sufficient level of self-governance while an effective national decision-making mechanism is ensured. We will continue to rely on a genuine and coordinated support by all international partners involved in the negotiation process.

Mr. Chairperson,

Speaking about strategic priorities of my country I would like to highlight that 2014 is undoubtedly a year of major achievements for the **European integration agenda** of the Republic of Moldova. As a result of complex reforms carried out by the Government, as of 28 April Moldovan citizens enjoy visa free travelling to the EU. This important accomplishment together with the implementation of the EU-Moldova Association Agreement to be signed by the end of June opens new horizons for the further modernization of the country and its rapprochement with the EU.

The abolition of the visa regime with the EU as well as the benefits that will result from the creation of the **Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Area** have an inclusive character and should cover both banks of Nistru river. At the same time, we hear voices of concern from Tiraspol regarding the impact of DCFTA on economy of the region. Our response was always very clear - when we are dealing with economic issues, the priority should be given to the economic interests of the region. Self-isolation and a politicized approach are not the right answers to the newly emerging economic and trade opportunities. Chisinau has offered Tiraspol dialogue to work on a formula that would allow Transnistrian companies to continue benefiting from preferential trade regime with the EU. Expertise and assistance related to DCFTA implementation could also be provided. Moreover, the EU has prolonged the existing trade preferences exclusively for the Transnistrian region until 1 January 2016. This gives Tiraspol additional time for analysis and preparation. Our offer remains valid and we hope time will be used productively.

It is our firm belief that the European integration process is able to contribute to the consolidation of our society as the EU represents a model for the development of the country. Therefore, we highly appreciate the support granted by our European partners including the assistance of the OSCE and the Council of Europe in advancing with democratic reforms. We

count on further continuous co-operation determined by the European integration objective of the Republic of Moldova.

Mr. Chairperson,

I would like to share a couple of thoughts on co-operation of Moldova with various OSCE institutions, in particular those dealing with human dimension. We strongly support the activity of the HCNM, ODIHR and the Representative on Freedom of the Media. The decision making autonomy of these institutions is crucial to their efficient activity.

The input, expertise and assistance provided by the institutions to Moldovan authorities is very much appreciated. Our co-operation with the **OSCE High Commissioner on National Minorities** is focused on strengthening domestic framework for protecting the national minorities' rights and promoting their social integration as well as dealing with sensitive issues on conflict resolution agenda such as Latin-script schools. We also appreciate the talks held during the recent visit to Moldova of the **OSCE Representative for Freedom of the Media**. A number of topical issues were discussed such as transition to digital television, activity of the regulatory body, assistance in drafting legislation. **ODIHR remains our constant partner**. In January, together with the ODIHR we organized a seminar on raising awareness on Holocaust. Later this year, the Office will be playing a key-role in organizing election observation mission in the context of parliamentary elections in the Republic of Moldova. The **Office of the OSCE Special Representative and Co-ordinator for Combating Trafficking in Human Beings** is also active in Moldova through a number of projects implemented in co-operation with the OSCE Mission to Moldova.

Mr. Chairperson,
Excellences,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

I started my remarks on a rather pessimistic note. But I am confident that times of mistrust and confrontation will pass. While dealing with daily emergencies we should not lose sight of a bigger picture. This Organization is based on a solid foundation that we have been developing together for many years and which should continue to serve us in future. I wish the Swiss-Serbian Chairmanships every success in fulfilling this important job.

Thank you.