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STATEMENT BY THE EUROPEAN UNION AT THE 1244th MEETING OF THE OSCE PERMANENT COUNCIL

17 October 2019

In response to the report by the Head of the OSCE Mission to Moldova, Claus Neukirch

Mr. Chairperson,

The European Union welcomes the Head of the OSCE Mission to Moldova, Ambassador Claus Neukirch, and thanks him for his third report to the Permanent Council.

We support a peaceful, comprehensive and lasting 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, and with a special status for Transdniestria.

We regret that it was not possible to reach an agreement at the meeting of the Permanent Conference on Political Issues in the Framework of the Negotiation Process for the Transdniestrian Settlement in the “5+2” format on 9 and 10 October and we stress the importance of finalizing the Bratislava protocol. The positive momentum that has characterized the negotiations since 2016 must be maintained.

The full implementation of the “package of eight” measures remains essential. With regard to the telecommunications sector, we call on the authorities of the Republic of Moldova to intensify the dialogue with the private operators concerned with a view to reaching a mutually acceptable solution. We also note the positive developments regarding the situation of Latin-script schools in the Transdniestrian region. We believe that additional measures are necessary to ensure their normal and sustainable operation. The announcement on 12 September of the lifting of restrictions on the free movement of officials on both sides of the Dniester is another welcome development.

We expect all these results to lead to tangible progress in the three baskets of the agenda agreed for the negotiation process, in particular on the political, institutional and security aspects of the third basket. We stress the importance for the authorities to finalize their shared vision for the settlement of the conflict.

Owing to the high risk posed by the Cobasna ammunition depot, we take note of the recent statements by the Russian Federation announcing its intention to destroy the ammunition from this depot. We recall that the OSCE has the mandate and means to contribute to the removal and destruction of the Russian munitions and armaments from Transdniestria and its involvement is essential to the transparency and international verification of these operations.

As indicated during the adoption of the United Nations General Assembly resolution on the complete and unconditional withdrawal of foreign military forces from the territory of the Republic of Moldova with regard to the Operational Group of Russian Forces, we recall the importance of completing the processes started as part of the commitments made at the OSCE Istanbul Summit in 1999.

We call on the Mission to continue to monitor the situation in the Security Zone and to report regularly on incidents there.

We commend the Mission for all its activities that contribute to improving security on both sides of the Dniester, including its new project to eliminate the considerable quantities of obsolete pesticides in Transdnistria.

The EU is also ready to support the Moldovan Government in the implementation of the 1994 Law on the Special Legal Status of Gagauzia, in order to strengthen the institutional functioning of this region within the Republic of Moldova.

We commend the Mission's efforts regarding gender mainstreaming in its work and the analyses of the differential impact on men and women of the issues discussed in the working groups. Efforts towards mediation and conflict prevention and resolution are more sustainable when they are inclusive.

Finally, we reaffirm the EU's commitment to strengthening political association and economic integration with the Republic of Moldova by working in close partnership on the basis of the fundamental principles enshrined in the Association Agreement. We support the new government's efforts to combat corruption and strengthen the rule of law. In this context, we welcome the fruitful co-operation between the authorities of Moldova and the OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights, particularly in the area of justice sector reform.

The candidate countries North Macedonia¹, Montenegro¹ and Serbia¹, the country of the Stabilisation and Association Process and potential candidate Bosnia and Herzegovina, the European Free Trade Association countries and members of the European Economic Area Iceland and Liechtenstein, as well as Georgia, align themselves with this statement.

1 North Macedonia, Montenegro and Serbia continue to be part of the Stabilisation and Association Process.