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**STATEMENT BY MR. ALEXANDER LUKASHEVICH,
PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION,
AT THE 1166th MEETING OF THE
OSCE PERMANENT COUNCIL**

30 November 2017

**On the results of the meeting in the “5+2” format on a
Transdnestrian settlement**

Mr. Chairperson,

We welcome the results of the meeting held in Vienna on 27 and 28 November of the Permanent Conference on Political Issues in the Framework of the Negotiation Process for the Transdnestrian Settlement. The meeting saw a substantial exchange of opinions on all topical issues, including the drawn-out elaboration by the authorities in Moldova and Transdnestria of reciprocal measures outlined in the Protocol of the “5+2” meeting in Berlin on 2 and 3 June 2016.

The participants noted the progress achieved in the implementation of the strategy of “small steps” by the authorities in Moldova and Transdnestria, including the opening of the bridge over the Dniester between the villages of Gura-Bîculiu and Bychok, the agreements signed on the apostillization of Transdnestrian educational documents, the organization of interaction in the field of telecommunications, ensuring the functioning of Moldova-administered Latin script schools, and the use of farmland in the Dubăsari region. Unfortunately, a number of agreements still need to be fleshed out. As the experience with the Berlin package shows, it would be premature to announce agreements as having been arrived at until all technical details have been settled.

Particular attention at the Vienna “5+2” meeting was devoted to discussion of the outlook for resolving the priority issues in the Berlin checklist that were not settled in the designated time-frame.

The parties reconfirmed their readiness to co-ordinate and sign an agreement before the end of February 2018 on the mechanism for participation by vehicles from Transdnestria in international road traffic. It is important that all obstacles in this regard are removed at the set time and that the particular status under civil law of the inhabitants of Transdnestria is taken into account.

The participants in the meeting agreed in the course of 2018 to make practical progress towards resolving the problem of politically motivated criminal investigation. Despite having signed the Berlin Protocol and, in a gesture of “goodwill”, having suspended criminal proceedings against ten Moldovan public servants, the Moldovan authorities are still preventing the exchange of updated lists of current criminal proceedings.

Also by the end of 2018, the parties undertook to elaborate an improved mechanism for incorporating the agreements achieved in the “5+2” format into their national legislation. This would bring greater discipline to the fulfilment by the authorities in Moldova and Transnistria of their mutual obligations.

The parties confirmed their commitment to discuss all problems at the negotiating table in the “5+2” format in the framework of bilateral dialogue at a political level and in dedicated expert groups, in particular to resolve urgent socio-economic and humanitarian problems. Against that background, we are baffled by the deliberate disdain for the concerns of the Transnistrian side regarding the unilateral establishment by Moldova and Ukraine without consulting the Transnistrian authorities of a joint border customs post at the Kuchurgan checkpoint with the prospect of extending this restrictive measure to all 13 checkpoints on the Transnistrian part of the Ukrainian border. The political representative of Transnistria gave convincing arguments regarding the potential social and humanitarian threats from these acts, which are not even warranted by information from the European Union Border Assistance Mission to Moldova and Ukraine (EUBAM), which has not observed any border violations.

The participants in the meeting were in favour of a steady rhythm in the work of the negotiating process at all levels, including the “5+2” format. During the negotiations the political representatives of Moldova and Transnistria have regularly appealed to the mediators and observers, who in fact bear a share of the responsibility for implementation of the adopted decisions. We firmly believe that the convening of meetings in the “5+2” format at least six times a year, as provided for in the Principles and Procedures for the Conduct of Negotiations, would permit more convincing progress to be made in settling the Transnistrian problem. We expect the incoming Italian OSCE Chairmanship to make full use of the potential of this negotiating platform.

As a mediator and guarantor State of the settlement, Russia confirms that the approach to the peaceful resolution of the conflict in Transnistria remains unchanged. We are convinced that responsibility for achieving mutually acceptable agreements lies, first and foremost, with the parties to the conflict themselves. We are willing to continue to assist in this regard, in close co-ordination with the OSCE Chairmanship and other participants in the “5+2” process, in moving the negotiations forward in order to achieve a sustainable, fair and comprehensive settlement of the Transnistrian problem.

Thank you for your attention.