



United States Mission to the OSCE

Response to the Head of the OSCE Mission to Moldova

As delivered by Chargé d'Affaires a.i. Harry Kamian
to the Permanent Council, Vienna
November 1, 2018

The United States welcomes you, Ambassador Neukirch, in your first appearance at the Permanent Council in this capacity. We look forward to working with you. We appreciate the detailed substance of your report to the Council.

Making concrete progress in resolving protracted conflicts in the OSCE area is at the top of our agenda. The United States supports the 5+2 Format on the Settlement Process, and Moldova's sovereignty and territorial integrity within its internationally recognized borders with a special status for Transnistria.

The sides have made tremendous progress in the past two years, reaching agreements on six of the eight deliverables defined in Hamburg 2016. Of these six concrete measures, the sides are jointly implementing five. This progress demonstrates that political will and the readiness to find practical solutions can lead to results that bring real benefits to people living in affected areas on both sides of the Nistru River. Indeed, the settlement talks are not about *process* – they are about *progress*. The focus on results and outputs gave a strong impetus to the talks and helped the sides move away from a prolonged period of stagnation. These agreements are setting the precedent to determine the delineation of responsibilities, as called for in the OSCE Ministerial Statement-endorsed “end state.”

Continued focus on results and outputs will provide concrete guidance as the sides move toward a comprehensive settlement. While progress on tangible results is ultimately determined by the sides, the OSCE Mission to Moldova plays a key role in creating the environment whereby progress can take place. The United States encourages you, Ambassador, to help the sides reach agreement and implement the remaining deliverables from the package of eight – particularly the deliverable on telecommunications – before the end of the year, as reaffirmed in the Rome Protocol last May, and to develop a second generation of deliverables in the same spirit.

The sides must also do their part to advance the settlement process and can take a number of steps to improve security. The unsanctioned movement of military vehicles in the security zone must stop. The drawdown of munitions from the Cobasna weapons depot is necessary for increasing transparency and ensuring the safety of nearby residents. We call on Russia to withdraw its military forces from Moldova as agreed upon at the 1999 OSCE Istanbul

Summit. Freedom of movement through the security zone must be a reality. Thus, it is important to ensure the removal of any barriers that imply a border. It is also critical for the OSCE Mission to have unfettered access through all of Moldova, including Transnistria.

Ambassador Neukirch, we share your view that building a truly democratic state and inclusive society in Moldova creates an environment conducive to the settlement process and is an important end in itself. We value the Mission's contributions to promote Holocaust remembrance, the rights of members of minority groups, and tolerance. Moldova has made great strides through adoption of an action plan on Holocaust education and a national action plan on minority rights. Establishment of the Jewish History Museum in Chisinau will demonstrate Moldova's commitment to building an inclusive society while it comes to terms with its history. The United States encourages Moldova to build on this momentum by implementing these plans, promoting inclusion of other marginalized groups like the Roma community and LGBTI persons, and combating hate speech *while fully respecting freedoms of expression*. The OSCE's support, through the Mission and the independent institutions, is a valuable resource for the government and people of Moldova. Likewise, the United States urges Moldova to revise its laws to implement the special legal status for Gagauzia before the next parliamentary elections.

Moldova's parliamentary elections in February 2019 offer the country a renewed opportunity to demonstrate its progress in establishing a solid democratic foundation. We encourage Moldova to address abuses of administrative resources and to foster a pluralistic media environment as ODIHR recommended after the country's 2016 October presidential election. Following the invalidation of the recent mayoral election in Chisinau, and with parliamentary elections on the horizon, these reforms are even more pressing.

In conclusion, allow me to thank you, Ambassador Neukirch, and your staff for your work to help advance the Transnistrian settlement process in the 5+2 format. The Mission's impartial reporting on the political and security situation, including in the Transnistrian region, is crucial. The United States is committing to working with Moldova as it builds an inclusive society and strengthens its democracy based on respect for the rule of law, human rights, and fundamental freedoms for all.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.