

ENGLISH only

STATEMENT

**delivered by H.E. Mr. Andrei STRATAN, Deputy Prime-minister, Minister of Foreign Affairs and European Integration of the Republic of Moldova at the 14th OSCE Ministerial Council Meeting
(Brussels, 4-5 December, 2005)**

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. Chairman,
Distinguished colleagues,
Ladies and gentlemen,

I would like from the outset to express gratitude to the Belgian authorities for their efforts during the 2006 OSCE Chairmanship. By its contribution to ensuring regional and international security and cooperation, the OSCE remained a stabilizing factor in the area of its responsibility. As far as Moldova is concerned, the OSCE has maintained an engaging cooperation in various fields with my country, from mediating the transnistrian settlement process to implementing a number of assistance projects in Moldova.

While Moldova has aligned itself with the statement of my distinguished colleague from Finland on behalf of the EU, I would like to say a few things in my national capacity.

First of all, the Republic of Moldova reiterates its position on the necessity to implement, without delay, the commitments undertaken by the Russian Federation at the OSCE Istanbul Summit. Being a state that prohibits the stationing of foreign military facilities and bases on its territory, the Republic of Moldova proceeds from the understanding that the authorities of the Russian Federation will show respect for the constitutional choice of the people of Moldova – the neutral status of my country.

We deeply regret the fact that, in the course of recent months, the Tiraspol administration is completely torpedoing the negotiation process in the "5+2" format and has engaged itself in the exercise of conducting various so-called "referenda", that misinform, primarily, the population from the region. We express our gratitude to the international community for an unequivocal assessment of these events. At the same time, we welcome the common position of the mediators and observers in the negotiation process – the OSCE, Russian Federation, Ukraine, European Union and USA – that the settlement of the transnistrian problem should be based on defining the status of the Transnistrian region, while respecting the sovereignty and territorial integrity of the Republic

of Moldova. It is this very premise that can and must be the fundament for the continuation of the negotiation process. We note with satisfaction the resumption of a sincere dialogue with the Russian Federation on this issue, both at the level of Heads of State, and at that of experts. We believe that this kind of open dialogue could lead to an entirely new and constructive atmosphere in the settlement process. This will allow us to implement those concept proposals, ideas and visions that were put forward by the President of Ukraine, the OSCE, EU, USA, as well as the documents adopted by the Parliament of the Republic of Moldova in the summer of 2005.

The Republic of Moldova pleads for an active development of confidence-building measures between the both banks of the Nistru River. This is a topical issue, since the absolute majority of nearly half a million inhabitants of the Transnistrian region have officially confirmed their Moldovan citizenship, more than seven thousand students from the region are studying in Chisinau, and more than twenty thousand residents of the region are coming freely to work in Chisinau on a daily basis. The absence of religious, national and other differences, the lack of any reciprocal phobias, represent an excellent ground for the Transnistrian region to finally become open. We call on the Tiraspol authorities to remove all obstacles to the free movement of persons and goods as soon as possible.

I can only regret that such respectable countries, such honorable and trustworthy people have to discuss a conflict, the nature of which is exclusively in an authoritarian system of governance in the transnistrian region, a complete self-isolation of the region, a resounding hatred towards the fundamental human rights and freedoms that we share. We are united with the residents of the transnistrian region, frequently misinformed by the separatist propaganda, frightened by the separatist security services, deprived of access to alternative information regarding the real state of affairs. For fifteen years these people survive in desperate conditions, without a chance to neither address a recognized court, get rid of the regime's constant war mongering, nor return to the realities of the 21st century. The orientation of the Republic of Moldova towards European values and standards, close cooperation of our country with the EU on the basis of the Moldova – EU Action Plan represent an excellent basis for solving the conflict within this generally recognized democratic dimension.

It is also important that Tiraspol authorities follow the policy of unilateral demilitarization, chosen by the Republic of Moldova. Let me remind that the transnistrian paramilitary forces significantly exceed the military contingent of the Republic of Moldova, despite the fact that the population of the region is seven times smaller than the population of the rest of my country. The Republic of Moldova is ready to demilitarize also a considerable part of its carabineer

troops and border guards. We stand, as we did before, for a peaceful resolution of the conflict and our unilateral demilitarization should only increase the confidence of the mediators and observers that such an approach has no alternative. From our point of view, today, the resources of a peaceful resolution of the transnistrian conflict surpass politically and morally the resources of any military solutions.

The position of principle of the Republic of Moldova is to maximally decrease the military element in the system of ensuring security in the conflict area. We believe that the time is ripe for a transition from this kind of anachronism to an institution of military and civilian observers, acting under an international mandate, preferably that of OSCE. The Republic of Moldova is ready to engage in negotiation with all interested states regarding the practical implementation of such a mandate. As a neutral state we are extremely sensitive to such issues and we would like to see our country in the nearest future free of any form of foreign military or quasi-military presence. And only such a transformation will allow the Republic of Moldova to ratify the Adapted CFE Treaty.

We stress with satisfaction the new environment that dominates today the economic development of the transnistrian region. The common efforts of the Republic of Moldova, Ukraine and European Union on the transnistrian segment of the Moldovan-Ukrainian state border proved to be extremely effective. These efforts, undoubtedly, increased the level of economic security of our countries and the responsibility of transnistrian businesses. The fact that practically all transnistrian enterprises have been registered in Chisinau and the uninterrupted conduct of their export-import transactions underscores yet again the correctness of the chosen approach. These entities have traveled the distance from unlawful enterprises to companies that have a real opportunity to conduct business within the legal framework of the Republic of Moldova. In this context we call for the continuation of the EU Border Assistance Mission to the Republic of Moldova and Ukraine, and regard it as a guarantee of the security and transparency on this segment of the Moldovan-Ukrainian border.

The Republic of Moldova reiterates its appeal to all OSCE participating states, to the mediators – the OSCE, Russian Federation and Ukraine, to the observers – the European Union and the USA to render the necessary assistance to Moldova in the mentioned dimensions of the conflict settlement. We stand for the soonest possible resumption of the negotiations in the “5+2” format. The transnistrian conflict definitely remains one of the less difficult cases in the list of existing political-territorial disputes. The good will, openness and constructive approach of the position of my country make this task much easier for those who want to honestly help us.

Mr. Chairman,

In conclusion, I would like to assure the partners of the Republic of Moldova that my country will continue to undertake all necessary efforts in order to affirm itself as a member of the community of democratic states, as well as a reliable partner within OSCE. We welcome the activity of the OSCE Mission in Moldova and will keep an intense rhythm of cooperation with the team led by Ambassador Louis O'Neill.

We express our gratitude to the Belgian Chairmanship for paying so much attention to the problems of the Republic of Moldova, as well as for its contribution to inform the OSCE community about the situation in my country, including the recent visit of OSCE Ambassadors. I would like to wish every success to my colleague Miguel Ángel Moratinos, Minister for Foreign Affairs and Cooperation of Spain, in exercising the OSCE Chairmanship during 2007.

Thank you.