



## United States Mission to the OSCE

### **Response to the Report by the OSCE Head of Mission to Moldova, Ambassador Kelly Keiderling**

As delivered by Chargé d'Affaires, a.i. Timothy Hanway  
to the Permanent Council, Vienna  
April 25, 2024

Ambassador Keiderling, it is a pleasure to welcome you back to the Permanent Council. Thank you for your comprehensive report on the situation on the ground in Moldova and on the Mission's work to facilitate Moldova's settlement process and advance on its chosen democratic trajectory.

On the heels of OSCE Chair-in-Office Borg's April 12 visit to Moldova, your presentation comes at a critical time. As Moldova further consolidates its democratic reforms, it continues to grapple with Russia's provocations and ruthless war against neighboring Ukraine.

Russia still refuses to fulfill its 1999 Istanbul Summit pledge to withdraw its troops and ammunition from Moldova's sovereign territory. The ongoing stationing of Russia's troops without Moldova's consent is a breach of international law.

Further, Moscow opened on Moldova's sovereign territory without Moldova's consent polling stations for Russia's unfair and unfree presidential election on February 7, 2024. We condemn this malign action.

Even as Russia denies its own citizens the ability to engage in free and fair democratic processes, Russia has long engaged in malign influence operations aimed at undermining Moldova's democracy and that of other countries. To cite an egregious example, in February and March 2023, a Russian intelligence-linked malign influence group attempted to exploit protests to seize the Moldovan Government House and foment a manufactured insurrection in an apparent effort to destabilize the Moldovan government. The U.S. Treasury Department later sanctioned seven members of this group.

Madam Chair, the United States supports a peaceful and comprehensive settlement of the Transnistria conflict that respects Moldova's sovereignty and territorial integrity within its internationally recognized borders and that fully guarantees the human rights and fundamental freedoms of all peoples in Moldova. Although the formal 5+2 process is on hold, we note that the sides continue to meet in OSCE-facilitated direct talks to ensure continued discussion and resolution of issues important to residents of both banks of the Nistru River. The Mission's steadfast efforts to advance the working groups' dialogue and confidence building measures tied to the settlement process underscore the value of this field operation.

We expect all sides to respect and value the role the Mission plays in Moldova, including exercising its mandate in full to fully monitor and report on the situation in the Security Zone. This includes at the Cobasna munitions depot and along Moldova's border with Ukraine, and in response to recent alleged security incidents publicized by the de facto authorities. Having objective information from the OSCE is critical as Moldova investigates security incidents, including those involving its airspace related to Russia's war against Ukraine. We underscore the need for unfettered access to Moldova's Transnistrian region.

The United States urges the de facto Transnistrian authorities to fully respect human rights and calls for the unconditional release of all unjustly detained political prisoners in Transnistria, including Victor Pleshcanov who faces serious health problems. We are grateful for the OSCE Mission's advocacy for access to medical care for Pleshcanov and other prisoners and detainees.

We also appreciate your efforts to engage with the Autonomous Region of Gagauzia and regret the People's Assembly decision to suspend participation in the Inter-Parliamentary working group between Chisinau and Comrat. It is critical for the Mission to Moldova to continue engagement with leaders and residents of this important and culturally unique part of Moldova.

You and the Mission have our full support for a one-year mandate extension when the Permanent Council considers this matter in June.

Ambassador Keiderling, the United States thanks you and the staff of the Mission for your tireless commitment to assist Moldova in very challenging circumstances.

###