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**STATEMENT BY MR. ALEXANDER LUKASHEVICH,
PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION,
AT THE 1139th MEETING OF THE
OSCE PERMANENT COUNCIL**

30 March 2017

**In response to the report by the
Head of the OSCE Mission to the Republic of Moldova, Michael Scanlan**

Mr. Chairperson,

We are grateful to the distinguished Head of the OSCE Mission to the Republic of Moldova, Ambassador Michael Scanlan, for his analysis of the current situation in the negotiation process for the settlement of the conflict in Transdniestria, and for his report on the activities of the field presence he heads.

As a guarantor country and mediator in the negotiation process for a Transdniestrian settlement, the Russian Federation is interested in promoting dialogue between the Governments of Moldova and Transdniestria aimed at achieving viable solutions with the assistance of international mediators in the “5+2” format. We are convinced that the basis for the future formula can only be a deliberate and balanced compromise, worked out by the parties to the conflict themselves.

The Special Representative of the OSCE Chairperson-in-Office for the Transdniestrian Settlement Process, Ambassador Wolf-Dietrich Heim, has been tasked with ensuring the rhythm and consistency of the work of the “5+2” mechanism. We look forward to the early convening of its next round without preconditions. To motivate the parties to work more actively to resolve problems affecting the population on both sides of the Dniester, there could be a clear timetable for holding such meetings with the participation of international mediators and observers. Unfortunately, three months have already passed since the beginning of 2017 and we have not seen such a timetable. We do not believe to be completely accurate the message that every round of negotiations in the “5+2” format should end with a tangible result that can be “touched” and presented to the public. If this were possible, the negotiations would not last more than 20 years, and there would be no need for our common mediation. We regard the “5+2” format as an authoritative negotiating platform, where the parties can share their point of view on existing problems with everyone and can make use of the collective intelligence of the mediators and observers to find possible solutions.

We are impressed by Mr. Scanlan's unwavering optimism in his assessment of the current situation in the negotiations for a Transdniestrian settlement. We hope that a similar attitude will be reflected in the effectiveness of the OSCE Mission's efforts to assist the parties in finding mutually acceptable solutions at the level of the relevant expert working groups, and in the negotiations between the parties' political representatives. We will be ready to judge the OSCE field presence's work, depending on the concrete results in this key area for the Mission.

We note with regret that to date there are no serious grounds for claiming qualitative changes in the negotiation process for a Transdniestrian settlement. Significant in this regard are the difficulties in implementing the agreements already reached, recorded in the protocol of the meeting of the "5+2" format held in Berlin in 2016. Most of them are still only on paper. Let us repeat, the implementation of decisions approved in principle on issues that are socially significant for the population on both banks of the Dniester and on the issue of politically motivated criminal proceedings is a key indicator of the parties' genuine interest in finding a mutually acceptable basis for moving along the path to a political settlement. We are satisfied with the steps taken by the Transdniestrian Government. For example, the leader of Transdniestria announced that, as a gesture of goodwill, criminal proceedings against ten Moldovan officials have been halted. Issues concerning Romanian-language teaching in schools and farmers in the Dubossary district are being addressed by the Transdniestrians. We expect an appropriate response from the Government of Moldova.

We are convinced that a mechanism for implementing the agreements reached within the framework of the "5+2" format would improve discipline in the implementation of the co-ordinated decisions. We propose that work be resumed on the corresponding agreement, the draft of which was presented by the Russian delegation during the Berlin meeting last year.

The consistent and unconditional implementation of all agreed compromises would increase trust between the parties and further the effectiveness of future negotiations, including the planned Vienna round of negotiations with the proposed new package of confidence-building measures. We are ready to assist the parties in the development of mutually acceptable agreements on those topics. At the same time, we believe that we should not avoid dialogue on other problematic subjects that could seriously complicate the settlement process. In particular, we believe that the Transdniestrian Government's concern in connection with the plans of Moldova and Ukraine to establish joint customs and border control at the Kuchurgan checkpoint deserves attention. The damage from that, according to Transdniestrian estimates, could amount to more than 6 per cent of the region's annual gross domestic product. Is this the result to which we should strive? It is also surprising that this is occurring without consultation with the Transdniestrian Government. We should probably return to the generally accepted international practice and take into account the views of all interested parties. That would be a striking example of creating real trust between the banks of the Dniester.

Thank you for your attention.