

PC.DEL/1568/17
20 November 2017

ENGLISH
Original: FRENCH

STATEMENT BY THE EUROPEAN UNION AT THE 1164th MEETING OF THE OSCE PERMANENT COUNCIL

16 November 2017

In response to the report by the Head of the OSCE Mission to the Republic of Moldova, His Excellency Ambassador Michael Scanlan

The European Union thanks Ambassador Scanlan for his seventh report to the Permanent Council.

The European Union supports a peaceful and comprehensive settlement of the Transdnestrian conflict on the basis of respect for the territorial integrity and sovereignty of the Republic of Moldova within its internationally recognized borders, with a special status for the Transdnestrian region. As emphasized in the Ministerial Statement adopted in Hamburg, we support outcome-based negotiations and the preservation of the “5+2” format.

We appreciate the very good work by the Mission and Ambassador Scanlan and the great commitment of the Special Representative of the OSCE Chairperson-in-Office, Ambassador Heim, to a settlement of the conflict. The initiative of the Chairmanship to offer an informal opportunity to discuss the impact of the field missions on the day before the Permanent Council helps to give a clearer idea of how a mission works.

We welcome the signature on 3 November of a decision to open the Gura Bîcului-Bychok bridge, which marks an important step in the negotiating process. We hope that the spirit of compromise that made this decision to reopen the bridge possible will remain and permit positive results to be achieved on the other seven priorities identified in the Berlin Protocol and the package of eight measures.

The European Union continues to pay particular attention to the situation of schools teaching in the Latin alphabet in the Transdnestrian region. This long-standing issue needs to be closely monitored so as to ensure an effective resumption of normal and sustainable functioning of these schools.

The continuation and conclusion of discussions would offer specific benefits in the daily life of the population. We trust that the relaunching of the negotiations in the “5+2” format on 27 November in Vienna will bring tangible progress in the three baskets, in particular on the political, institutional and security aspects of the third basket. We are concerned about the military exercises conducted in the Transdnestrian region mentioned recently by the authorities in Chişinău. The withdrawal of the remaining units of the Russian army from the Republic of Moldova is also an important question that needs to be settled.

We strongly urge the Government and Parliament of the Republic of Moldova and the President to finalize a document presenting a joint vision of the conflict settlement that would serve as a basis for negotiations.

We recall our attachment to strengthening the status of Gagauzia as an autonomous territorial unit. Like the High Commissioner on National Minorities during his visit to Moldova at the beginning of the month, we welcome the resumption of dialogue within the open-ended working group on co-operation between the Parliament of the Republic of Moldova and the People's Assembly of Gagauzia and urge that the law of 1994 be applied.

We welcome the adoption yesterday of a three-year action plan for the implementation of the Strategy for the Consolidation of Interethnic Relations.

We also congratulate the Government of the Republic of Moldova for starting to implement the action plan on Holocaust remembrance and education.

Regarding the Moldovan electoral system, the European Union continues to share the view of the Venice Commission and OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights that the amendments to it raise grave concerns with respect to effective democracy in the current political context. We are closely monitoring the implementation of this reform. We recall that freedom of the media is a fundamental element of democratic life and urge the Government of the Republic of Moldova to improve the national legislation so as to limit the concentration of media ownership and guarantee pluralism. In that context, we encourage the Mission to continue its co-operation with the Office of the OSCE Representative on Freedom of the Media. We note the announcement by the President of the Parliament of the Republic of Moldova on 10 November regarding the draft new Audiovisual Code and welcome the intention to submit it for public discussion and to send it to the Venice Commission.

In conclusion, the European Union reaffirms its commitment to strengthening its political association and economic integration with the Republic of Moldova under the Association Agreement and calls on the Republic of Moldova to continue the implementation of the reforms set forth in the Association Agreement. We appreciate the opening on 17 July 2017 of the joint Cuciurgan-Pervomaisk checkpoint between Moldova and Ukraine. The European Union hopes that the Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Agreement will continue to be applied without obstacles throughout the entire territory of the Republic of Moldova, including the Transdnestrian region.

The candidate countries the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia¹, Montenegro¹ and Albania¹, the country of the Stabilisation and Association Process and potential candidate Bosnia and Herzegovina and the Free Trade Association country and member of the European Economic Area Norway align themselves with this statement.

1 The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Montenegro and Albania continue to be part of the Stabilisation and Association Process.