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STATEMENT BY THE EUROPEAN UNION AT THE 1071st MEETING OF THE OSCE PERMANENT COUNCIL

15 October 2015

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

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

Contributing to the peaceful settlement of the Transdniestrian conflict is at the heart of the Mission headed by you. In that regard, we regret the current blockage in the “5+2” format that has lasted over a year now. The continuation and conclusion of discussions in this format, which is the only way of guaranteeing the transparency and legitimacy of a lasting solution, play a major role in the stability and security of the region and would offer specific advantages for the Republic of Moldova, including the region of Transdniestria.

We therefore urge the parties to demonstrate the necessary political will to resume the process. It is important for them to refrain from taking and implementing decisions that will increase tensions in an already difficult regional and national situation. The European Union is willing to support the implementation of a solution to resolve the conflict. We remain convinced of the need to fix a date for a formal meeting in the “5+2” format without delay or preconditions. We are counting on the support of the Special Representative of the Chairperson-in-Office, Ambassador Bogojević.

We expect tangible progress to be made in the negotiations in the “5+2” format in all three baskets, particularly on the political, institutional and security aspects of the third basket, with respect for the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Moldova. It must be noted that the regular meetings in the “1+1” format and in the various working groups have been slow in translating into concrete progress, even if some advances have been made, notably with regard to rail transport. It is essential for the parties to increase their efforts to find solutions within these working groups. We also urge the parties to step up their efforts to foster legal commerce with a view to ensuring that the Association Agreement on a Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Area (DCFTA) is implemented effectively throughout the territory of the Republic of Moldova, including the region of Transdniestria. It is important to restore a favourable basis for progress, particularly in the light of the conference in Bavaria on confidence-building measures and with a view to enabling the negotiations in the “5+2” format to be formally resumed.

The Mission's projects in its three dimensions also contribute to the establishment of the necessary conditions for a peaceful settlement of the Transdnestrian conflict with respect for the sovereignty and territorial integrity of the Republic of Moldova. For this to happen, your Mission requires complete and unhindered access to the entire territory of the Republic of Moldova, including the region of Transdnestria, and to the depot of Russian arms in Kolbasna. We once again call on all of the participants in the negotiations in the "5+2" format to use their influence to convince Tiraspol that it is in its interests to put an end to the restrictions on freedom of movement by members of the Mission. We support the Mission's mandate based on commitments undertaken within the OSCE by its participating States, particularly in the area of security, and urge the Mission to actively implement it and continue to follow and report on the developments in this area.

The obstacles to freedom of movement, to the opening of bridges and to free access by farmers to their land in the region of Transdnestria call for active dialogue in a spirit of co-operation. The same applies to the incidents in the security zone, which has no reason any more to be militarized, and to the withdrawal of the remaining units of the Russian army in the Republic of Moldova. There is still a long way to go to achieve the demilitarization of all military forces in the region, which needs to be accomplished transparently and with a view to strengthening mutual confidence. The OSCE and its Mission to the Republic of Moldova have an important role to play here, and the Mission can rely on our full support.

The European Union also continues to devote particular attention to schools teaching in the Latin alphabet in the region of Transdnestria. The Mission should continue to follow up this issue so as to better assist in efforts to ensure the normal and long-term operation of these eight schools.

We welcome the very active participation by the Republic of Moldova in the Eastern Partnership and the country's success in its rapprochement with the European Union. We hope that the population and all the political and economic decision makers in the Republic of Moldova, particularly those in the region of Transdnestria, will be able to recognize and take advantage of the opportunities offered to them and to resolutely continue the reforms.

The candidate countries the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia,¹ Montenegro¹, Iceland² and Albania¹, the country of the Stabilisation and Association Process and potential candidate country Bosnia and Herzegovina, the European Free Trade Association countries and members of the European Economic Area Liechtenstein and Norway, as well as Georgia, 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.

2 Iceland continues to be a member of the European Free Trade Association and of the European Economic Area.