



## **United States Mission to the OSCE**

### **Response to the Head of the OSCE Mission to Moldova, Ambassador Michael Scanlan**

As delivered by Ambassador Daniel B. Baer  
to the Permanent Council, Vienna  
November 17, 2016

The United States warmly welcomes you, Ambassador Scanlan, to the Permanent Council. We thank you for another comprehensive report on the work of the OSCE Mission to Moldova, and on the resumption of talks in the framework of the 5+2 Settlement Process on the Transnistrian Conflict. Your straightforward assessment of the situation and insightful perspectives on the way forward are exactly the kind of counsel we need in order to do our work effectively.

Ambassador Scanlan, the United States strongly supports the OSCE Mission to Moldova. The Mission plays a crucial role in efforts to broker a comprehensive settlement to the Transnistria conflict by facilitating direct dialogue between the sides and supporting confidence-building measures that address concerns in all three OSCE dimensions. The OSCE Mission to Moldova also has an important role to play in supporting Moldova's reform program, and in providing unbiased reporting on the political and security situation, including in the Transnistrian region.

The OSCE Mission's crucial support for reinvigorating the Settlement Process on the Transnistrian Conflict is bearing fruit. The resumption of the 5+2 Talks in Berlin last June was a positive development. We were encouraged by the Government of Moldova's readiness to give a meaningful definition of a special status for Transnistria, and we call on Moldovan authorities to make good on this promise in 2017. We agree with your assessment that regular and results-oriented meetings of the chief negotiators in the 1+1 format with substantive support from the working groups are necessary to keep the settlement process moving forward. The United States remains committed to working with the other 5+2 partners to find a comprehensive settlement that respects the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Moldova and affords a special status for the Transnistrian region. A strong first step towards this goal would be the completion of the outstanding confidence-building measures outlined in the Berlin Protocol.

The signing of the Berlin Protocol was a significant step, and it is important that the parties follow through with implementation of their commitments. It is critical that the parties address the "third basket" on political and security issues of the settlement agenda, and leadership on both sides must re-commit to taking action. We call for an end to threats and harassment directed against civil society members and organizations that undertake human rights advocacy and monitoring in Transnistria.

While we have not seen the type of progress we have hoped for in the political-military dimension in many years, particularly with respect to the completion of withdrawal and

destruction of ammunition and armaments from the Transnistrian region, the United States supports your continued efforts in this area. Our experts are ready to work with your team and with key players in the region to facilitate the removal and destruction of military equipment. We are encouraged by requests to the Mission for further support in the removal of radioactive materials, dangerous pesticides, and confiscated weapons, which can help build trust and confidence on both banks of the Dniestr/Nistru River.

The Mission must have unrestricted access to all of Moldova, including the Transnistrian region, to perform its activities, including the conduct of confidence-building measures and of observation patrols throughout the entire security zone. Restrictions undermine the Mission's ability to implement its mandate in support of the settlement process and the ability of OSCE participating States to assess the security situation on the ground accurately. All participating States should vocally support the Mission's full access.

The United States condemns Russia's holding of military exercises on August 3 in the Security Zone without the Government of Moldova's consent. These exercises are yet another example of Russia's disregard for and violation of international law. We call on Russia to uphold its international commitments, including its 1999 Istanbul commitment to withdraw its military.

And colleagues, if I may, I would say that we should all study closely the Russian statement today, because it was not as constructive as one would hope for a participating State that was truly interested in seeing a resolution of this conflict.

We welcome ODIHR's November 13 preliminary findings that the second round of Moldova's presidential election was competitive and that fundamental freedoms were respected. We were also pleased to see so many voters exercise their democratic rights in a peaceful manner. However, we note ODIHR's preliminary finding that increasingly polarized media coverage, harsh and intolerant rhetoric, and continued instances of abuse of administrative resources detracted from the process. We strongly encourage the Government of Moldova to address these discrepancies in order to establish a solid democratic foundation for future elections.

We welcome the Mission's efforts to draw attention to the autonomous region of Gagauzia, and to support the joint parliamentary working group between Chisinau and Comrat. This work is a good example of the kind of support the OSCE can provide. We encourage Moldova's parliament to adopt amendments to national legislation which would affirm the status of Gagauzia as an autonomous territorial unit within Moldova. We also encourage the Government of Moldova to adopt a strategy on implementing the OSCE High Commissioner on National Minorities' Ljubljana guidelines on integration of diverse societies. We commend the Government of Moldova for working with ODIHR to convene a workshop in October 2016 on best practices on commemorating and studying the Holocaust, and encourage the government to adopt an action plan. Building a tolerant and inclusive society, in which the past is not forgotten and the future is embraced by all, is vital for ensuring stability and well-being.

In closing, allow me to thank you and your talented staff, and to reiterate my government's support for the Mission's excellent work. Ambassador Scanlan, we appreciated your update on how you have collaborated with the OSCE's independent institutions to drive positive change on the ground. Finally, allow me also to underscore the United States' commitment to working with Moldova as it continues its integration into European institutions. Moldova's progress on reforms to ensure respect for the rule of law, as well as human rights and fundamental freedoms – indeed, for the full range of its OSCE and international commitments – will be essential during this period of political transition and into the future.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

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