



United States Mission to the OSCE

Response to Head of the OSCE Mission to Moldova, Ambassador Jennifer Brush

As delivered by Ambassador Daniel B. Baer
to the Permanent Council, Vienna
May 29, 2014

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

The United States warmly welcomes you, Ambassador Brush, to the Permanent Council, and we thank you for your comprehensive report -- and for your candor. The kind of unvarnished, straightforward opinions and assessments you gave us this morning are exactly the kind of assessment we need in order to do our work effectively, so thank you for being so frank and honest in what you're seeing and the work that lies ahead for us.

On this, your last appearance at the Permanent Council in your capacity as Head of the OSCE Mission to Moldova, you have shown how you have ably steered the Mission through increasingly challenging times and worked tirelessly to raise awareness about the conflict, to advance the settlement process, and to help Moldova live up to its democratic aspirations.

The United States strongly supports the OSCE Mission to Moldova. The Mission performs a crucial role in efforts to broker a comprehensive settlement to the Transnistria conflict both by facilitating direct dialogue between the sides and official negotiations in the 5+2 format, and by supporting confidence-building measures that address concerns in all three OSCE dimensions.

The OSCE Mission to Moldova 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. We fully share your view that the Mission must have unrestricted access to all of Moldova, including the Transnistrian region, to perform its activities, including the conduct of observation patrols throughout the entire security zone. The 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. All participating States should support vocally support the Mission's full access.

We were disappointed that the last round of 5+2 talks planned for April was postponed. We encourage the parties to take full advantage of the new dates, June 5 and 6, and call on all the parties to avoid any unilateral actions that could further disrupt this important process. We agree it is past time to begin discussions of core political and security issues in the third basket of the agreed 5+2 agenda. These vital issues have languished long enough. Restrictions by the de facto Transnistrian authorities on movements of the OSCE Mission underscore that these core issues must be addressed, and that there is nothing to be gained by further delay. 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.

While we have not seen the type of progress we may 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 creatively with your team and with key players in the region to facilitate the removal and destruction of military equipment.

We welcome the Mission's efforts to draw attention to the autonomous region of Gagauzia, and to provide the joint working group between Chisinau and Comrat with the analytical tools to resolve difficulties before they escalate. The Mission's assistance to Moldova to address rights of members of minorities will help reduce tensions throughout the country. Furthermore, we strongly support the Mission's efforts to promote implementation of recommendations by the High Commissioner on National Minorities (HCNM) regarding the Moldovan-administered, Latin-script schools in Transnistria. It is high time to begin serious discussions toward an agreement on the operation of these schools that is mutually beneficial to all stakeholders, particularly the pupils and their families.

We commend the Mission's efforts to help Moldova achieve its democratic aspirations through promoting good governance, media freedom, human rights awareness, and dialogue with a broad cross-section of civil society groups and leaders. Transparent governance is central to reducing corruption and building citizens' trust in state institutions. Independent and pluralistic media will be particularly important as Moldova prepares for parliamentary elections this fall. We encourage the Mission to continue to work closely with both Moldova and OSCE institutions such as the Representative on Freedom of Media and the Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR) to help the country continue to meet its OSCE commitments. We also welcome the Mission's activities to support efforts to combat both domestic violence and trafficking in human beings.

The Mission's support for a Civil Society Forum is already bearing fruit, no matter the challenges, as the Forum becomes an important mechanism for building trust and confidence among the population on both banks of the Dniester/Nistru River, as well as for holding leaders accountable to the public and encouraging dialogue among them. We look forward to the conduct of the second "Model OSCE," an event that will help build links between young people from Chisinau, Tiraspol, and Comrat.

Allow me to also underscore my government's strong commitment to our partnership with Moldova. We remain committed to Moldova as it pursues its reforms and path to European integration. Respect for the rule of law, human rights, and fundamental freedoms—indeed, for the full range of OSCE and international commitments—will continue to figure prominently in our relationship. This will remain key to Moldova's relations with the European Union as well, as Moldova continues its integration into European institutions, and as it signs the Association Agreement and Deep and Comprehensive Trade Agreement with the EU in Brussels on June 27.

In closing, Ambassador Brush, thank you for your excellent work as the Head of Mission. You have clearly thrown your heart and soul, as well as your great courage and capabilities,

into your work. You deserve special credit for your efforts to raise visibility for the OSCE in resolving the Transnistria conflict, to conduct early warning, and to build trust and confidence on both sides of the Dniestr/Nistru River. I would also like to thank your staff and to convey my government's full support for the ongoing work of the Mission.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.