

Delegation of the Russian Federation

**STATEMENT BY MR. DMITRY BALAKIN,
DEPUTY PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF THE RUSSIAN
FEDERATION, AT THE 1199th MEETING OF THE
OSCE PERMANENT COUNCIL**

1 November 2018

**In response to the report by Ambassador Claus Neukirch,
Head of the OSCE Mission to Moldova**

Mr. Chairperson,

First of all, we should like to congratulate the distinguished Claus Neukirch on his appointment to the position of Head of the OSCE Mission to Moldova. We have no doubt that his experience in the OSCE and in Transdniestrian affairs in particular will be of considerable assistance in his new and responsible post.

In our general assessment of the report by the Head of the OSCE Mission, we note the effort to ensure continuity in the work.

It is important to provide an objective assessment of the current situation in the Transdniestrian settlement. While noting the unqualified positive dynamic in the conclusion of agreements by the sides on socio-humanitarian problems, which are of vital importance to the inhabitants on both banks of the Dniester, it is also imperative to recognize that both sides still have demands regarding their fulfilment. The report by the Head of the OSCE Mission points out that work on most of the issues mentioned in the Protocol of the “5+2” meeting in Rome is far from complete. The implementation by the authorities in Chişinău and Tiraspol of their reciprocal obligations regarding telecommunications, the closing of politically motivated criminal cases and the safeguarding of freedom of movement is completely stalled. We share the concern that the pre-election period getting under way in Moldova could further complicate dialogue with Transdniestria.

It is necessary in these difficult circumstances to concentrate on the full implementation without exception of agreements already concluded and to encourage the authorities in Chişinău and Tiraspol to seek a settlement of those issues where the sides are willing to compromise. It is sensible to continue to strengthen the atmosphere of trust between Moldova and Transdniestria in line with the proven practice of “small steps”. The resumption of expert discussions confirmed by the OSCE Mission on additional problematic aspects of mutual relations, from the protection of vulnerable groups of citizens to

co-operation in the banking and finance sectors, provides a solid agenda for negotiations in the foreseeable future.

There is still a need for assistance in creating the conditions necessary for progress to be made in the resolution of the Transdniestrian problem. It is also necessary, as has already been agreed, to step up the negotiating process at all levels, including meetings in the “5+2” format. We trust that at least one such meeting can be held before the end of the year in order to take stock of the work done in the last period and to identify ways of bringing the negotiations forward. Attempts to attach any preconditions to the organization of the meeting have no justification and are not compatible with the obligation to hold five to six of these meetings per year. The claim that it is not useful to hold “meetings for the sake of meetings” is untenable. I should like to recall, in particular, the positive role played by the practice of holding the “Bavarian conferences”, as they were called, on confidence-building measures in the Transdniestrian settlement, which, because of their informal nature, were not expected to produce any concrete agreements.

The task of working a mechanism for implementing the agreements reached in the “5+2” format into national legislation is still on the table. We expect a response to the corresponding proposals made by us and Transdniestria and the start of substantive discussions, as agreed, by the end of this year.

As for the ammunition depots in Colbasna, we should like to emphasize our commitment to their removal as soon as the necessary conditions are in place. This was the case in 2001–2002, until the breakdown in the signing of the Kozak Memorandum. In the Declaration of the 2002 OSCE Ministerial Council meeting in Porto, the withdrawal of the Operational Group of Russian Forces was clearly linked with the arrival at a political settlement of the Transdniestrian crisis.

We trust that the OSCE Mission’s activities will be in line with the overall task of harmonizing efforts by all sides involved in the negotiating process.

We confirm Russia’s unchanged approach to the peaceful settlement of the conflict in Transdniestria. We firmly believe that responsibility for arriving at mutually acceptable agreements lies first and foremost with the parties to the conflict themselves. We are willing to continue to provide assistance in close co-operation with the OSCE Chairmanship (whose efforts we note) and other participants in the “5+2” process.

Thank you for your attention.