

PC.DEL/504/14
12 May 2014

ENGLISH
Original: FRENCH

**STATEMENT BY
THE EUROPEAN UNION AT THE 999th MEETING OF THE
OSCE PERMANENT COUNCIL**

Vienna, 8 May 2014

**In response to the address by Ms. Natalia Gherman,
Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs of the
Republic of Moldova**

Minister,

The European Union welcomes you and thanks you for having shared with us your vision of the future of the Republic of Moldova and, more generally, of the situation in Europe in these critical times.

The success of the Republic of Moldova in its rapprochement with the European Union is impressive. We welcome the very active participation of your country in the Eastern Partnership. Your government's determined action has made it possible to initial the Association Agreement between the European Union and the Republic of Moldova, which also provides for the establishment of a deep and comprehensive free trade zone. It will be signed at the latest in June, and we look forward to its provisional implementation and entry into force as soon as possible. We congratulate your government for having taken care to invite Tiraspol to the preparations for these important developments and hope that its representatives will participate, as it is in the clear interests of the inhabitants of that region for them to do so.

We welcome the fact that citizens of the Republic of Moldova with biometric passports have been able for the last week to visit the European Union for short periods without requiring a visa. There are still a number of challenges to be faced, but this will be done with our support, including financial assistance. We expect it to have a beneficial effect on the modernization of the Moldovan economy, which will be open in future to our common market, the largest in the world, and on the attractiveness of the country for investors. We trust that all political and economic decision-makers throughout the country will recognize the opportunities being offered to them and will have the determination to continue the reforms, especially when it comes to combating corruption.

Minister,

We have listened to your concerns regarding the effects of the crisis in Ukraine on the security of your country. We share them and consider that under these circumstances it is

essential that the OSCE Mission to the Republic of Moldova be able to carry out its work without obstruction. The members of the Mission must be allowed full access to all of the territory of the Republic of Moldova, including Transdniestria and the Russian arms depot in Cobasna so as to be able to provide a neutral and objective assurance to all of us that there is no spread of instability in the region.

Minister,

In this volatile environment, you will be aware that the European Union is more than ever attached to the continuation and completion of the discussions in the “5+2” format, which is the only way of guaranteeing the necessary transparency and legitimacy for a lasting solution respecting the sovereignty and territorial integrity of the Republic of Moldova. A settlement of the conflict of this nature in the Republic of Moldova would represent a major advance towards stability and security in the region, but also towards prosperity and security for all of the inhabitants of your country. The European Union will provide its active support, including financial assistance, for the implementation of an agreement of this nature.

The “5+2” format must be supported by all participants, who should endeavour to reduce the tensions throughout the region. It is a great shame that the meeting in the “5+2” format scheduled to take place in Vienna in April was postponed because of the regrettable return by Tiraspol to the practice of demanding conditions for its participation. We urge that this meeting be organized without delay or preconditions, as planned on 5 and 6 June, in an atmosphere of active dialogue and a spirit of co-operation, with a view to achieving tangible progress in settling the conflict in the Republic of Moldova. We look forward to progress in all three baskets, particularly with regard to the political, institutional and security aspects of the third basket, while respecting the sovereignty and territorial integrity of the country.

We repeat our concern at the situation of schools teaching in the Latin alphabet in Transdniestria. We believe that political differences should not stop children from receiving schooling in the language of their choice. It is important for Tiraspol – which is not responsible for the administration of the schools – to stop obstructing their operation. It is essential to put an end to all measures that could create tensions and to ensure that they can function normally and sustainably.

We are very concerned at recent attempts by Tiraspol to question the right to property ownership of farmers living in villages administered by Chişinău on the left bank of the Dniester.

The obstacles to freedom of movement, opening the bridges on the Dniester and contacts between the citizens on either side of the river are issues that for too long have been calling for a response and for joint action. The same applies to incidents in the Security Zone, for which there is no longer any justification for militarization, and to the undertaking for the remaining troops of the Russian Federation to withdraw from the territory of the Republic of Moldova. There is still considerable work to be done in demilitarizing the area in an atmosphere of transparency and greater mutual trust. The OSCE and its Mission to the Republic of Moldova, which has our unfailing support, can play an important role in this regard. The attempts by Tiraspol to prevent members of the Mission from carrying out their mandate in the Republic of Moldova are very disquieting. We call on all participants in the negotiations in the “5+2” format to use their influence to prevent these obstacles to the accomplishment by the Mission of its mandate.

In conclusion, Minister, I should like to thank you once again for coming to Vienna today and to reaffirm our support for your work.

The candidate countries the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia¹, Montenegro¹ and Iceland², the countries of the Stabilisation and Association Process and potential candidate countries Albania and Bosnia and Herzegovina, the members of the European Free Trade Association Liechtenstein and Norway, as well as Ukraine, Georgia and Monaco, align themselves with this statement.

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

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