



***Statement by H.E. Mr. Bogdan Aurescu, Minister of Foreign Affairs of Romania
at the plenary session of the 28th OSCE Ministerial Council,***

Stockholm, 2-3 December 2021

*Madam Chairperson,
Distinguished colleagues,*

Romania fully subscribes to the statement made on behalf of the European Union, and I would like to make some remarks in my national capacity.

Let me thank Minister Linde and the whole team for their outstanding work.

The OSCE's key concept of co-operative and comprehensive security continues to be of utmost relevance and so are the principles of the Helsinki Final Act and of the Paris Charter.

Romania remains a devoted supporter of the OSCE principles and values. Unfortunately, year after year we witness the worsening of the security situation in the OSCE area.

We are worried about the rising sophistication of hybrid threats and aggression – from energy security to the instrumentalization of migrants - and also about the significant military build-up at the Eastern border of Ukraine and at the Black Sea, as well as the increasing number of cease fire violations in East Ukraine.

Protracted conflicts pose a very serious threat to the security of the entire OSCE area, not only the Black Sea region. We are marking 10 years since the adoption of the Vilnius Ministerial Council Decision on Elements of the Conflict Cycle, an anniversary that should remind to all of us of the responsibility to act towards the prevention of crises and conflicts in the OSCE area, the peaceful resolution of existing conflicts, as well as towards ensuring sustainable post-conflict rehabilitation.

Reaching sustainable political solutions for the protracted conflicts around the Black Sea region, through negotiation within internationally agreed formats, based on the principles and norms of the international law are essential for creating security and stability.

As I already stated yesterday during our working dinner, for Romania, the settlement of the protracted conflicts in the Black Sea region represents a matter of strategic importance. We are constantly promoting this topic high on the agenda of relevant multilateral formats and international organizations, such as the EU, because we need to make progress in the resolution of these conflicts.

The Special Monitoring Mission (SMM) to Ukraine has faced unprecedented restrictions on its freedom of movement. We urge those responsible to ensure that all restrictions on the SMM's freedom of movement are lifted and that the SMM and its assets can have safe and secure access to the entire territory of Ukraine.

We deeply regret the non-extension of the mandate the OSCE Border Observation Mission to Gukovo and Donetsk. For credible reactions, we need strategic situational awareness on the ground.

Romania reiterates its strong support for a peaceful resolution of the conflict in Ukraine, in full respect of its sovereignty and territorial integrity.

We will continue to promote a lasting and comprehensive settlement to the conflict dealt with by the Minsk Conference and we remain concerned about latest reports on rising incidents involving casualties in the area.

We fully support the parties to reach a negotiated, comprehensive and sustainable solution to all pending issues including through support for stabilization, post conflict rehabilitation and confidence building measures. Romania has actively pledged for an increased role of the EU to the stability and security of the region, including under the Eastern Partnership.

Romania firmly supports a comprehensive, peaceful, and sustainable settlement of the conflict in the Republic of Moldova within the 5+2 format, based on the sovereignty and territorial integrity of the Republic of Moldova within its internationally recognized borders and without affecting its pro-European orientation. I reiterate once again the importance of withdrawing foreign troops and ammunition from the territory of the Republic of Moldova, in accordance with international law and OSCE commitments.

A few words about Georgia, our neighbour across the Black Sea: we strongly support the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Georgia within its internationally recognized borders. We value the unique role of the Geneva International Discussions in facilitating a peaceful and sustainable resolution of the conflict and we welcome that three rounds took place this year.

We deplore the continuously deteriorating situation in Belarus. We call on the Belarusian authorities to implement the recommendations of the Benedek Report under the Moscow Mechanism from 2020 and to make full use of the offer of the OSCE Chairpersonship to facilitate a national, inclusive dialogue between the authorities and representatives of the opposition and civil society. There cannot be lasting security without full respect of human rights and fundamental freedoms, essential for free, democratic, and resilient societies.

We urge Belarus to stop using hybrid tools, including instrumentalizing migrants at its borders and we express our full solidarity with Poland, Lithuania and Latvia.

Let me reiterate Romania's constant support for the work and mandates of the three autonomous institutions: ODIHR, the Representative on Freedom of the Media, and the High Commissioner on National Minorities.

We need to urgently address the backsliding on human rights and fundamental freedoms, the ongoing and mounting restrictions on civil society and independent media, the growing pressure on human rights defenders and the intolerance in the OSCE area. In this vein, we welcome the focus of the Swedish Chairpersonship on democracy and fundamental freedoms, in particular the right to freedom of expression and media freedom. We deplore that there was no consensus on the proposed draft decisions on these issues.

It is unacceptable that the Human Dimension Implementation Meeting could not be organized this autumn. It is also unacceptable that the budget for 2021 was approved only in August this year. This affects the OSCE credibility.

We were among the Participating States that valued the discussions on hybrid threats in the context of the Structured Dialogue, as they are a feature of the security environment today.

This is the role we established for the Structured Dialogue: a States-owned and State-driven, open-ended process that should address the full range of concerns expressed by all participating States, be it the destabilizing accumulation of weapons, incidents and military exercises, protracted conflicts, the presence of foreign troops without host nation consent or climate change and security.

We are also concerned about the security risks created by military exercises, carried out without respecting OSCE commitments and obligations.

The Vienna Document should be urgently updated, according to the proposal put forward by the 34 participating states. It is important to start constructively engaging in this process, and to focus more on the grey areas, which are not covered by current instruments/mechanisms of military transparency. It constitutes a key element of our common security.

With reference to the position expressed by minister Lavrov according to which the missile defence system in Romania and Poland can be used for strikes, that is for offensive purpose, I can only restate that this view is fully incorrect.

The position of Romania, United States and NATO was expressed for many times – the missile defence system in Romania is purely defensive, it is meant solely for self defence in conformity with the UN Charter and is not directed towards the Russian Federation, but refers to threats from outside the Euro-Atlantic space. There is no intention whatsoever to transform or modify this system into an offensive one.

We welcome the decision regarding the 2025 OSCE Chairpersonship-in-office and congratulate Finland, which will be stewarding the organization in the year when we will celebrate 50 years since the adoption of the Helsinki Final Act.

We regret that no consensus was reached on the draft decision regarding the 2024 OSCE Chairpersonship-in-office. We reaffirm our support for Estonia in this regard.

Let me conclude by extending our best wishes to the incoming Polish Chairpersonship of the OSCE in 2022 – and re-assure it of Romania's very strong support.