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**STATEMENT BY MR. ALEXANDER LUKASHEVICH,
PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION,
AT THE 1286th MEETING OF THE OSCE PERMANENT COUNCIL**

22 October 2020

On the report by the Head of the OSCE Mission to the Republic of Moldova

Mr. Chairperson,

We are grateful to the distinguished Ambassador Claus Neukirch for his detailed analysis of the situation regarding the Transdniestrian settlement and for his report on the steps being taken on behalf of the OSCE to facilitate dialogue between the Sides.

The report reflects the tense atmosphere surrounding the dialogue between the authorities in Chişinău and Tiraspol. The social and humanitarian measures agreed by the Sides from the “Berlin plus package” have yet to be implemented, there are mutual accusations of non-compliance with previous agreements, and it is difficult to develop the additional reciprocal measures outlined by the Sides at the end of last year and the beginning of this year. The negotiating process is faltering. In fact, dialogue between the President of the Republic of Moldova, Igor Dodon, and the leader of Transdniestria, Vadim Krasnoselsky, has remained the only effective method of resolving disputes.

We are convinced that urgent steps are needed to rectify this situation. We consider that it would be useful in the current circumstances to hold a new meeting of the Permanent Conference on Political Issues in the Framework of the Negotiation Process for the Transdniestrian Settlement in the “5+2” format. As far as we are aware, at the meeting with Mr. Neukirch, the Transdniestrian side expressed its willingness to hold such a meeting without preconditions. We also expect a positive response from the Moldovan Government in that regard.

As a matter of principle, we believe that the dialogue between the Sides should be intensified at all levels, in line with the agreements enshrined in the “5+2” format and the series of statements by the ministers for foreign affairs of the OSCE participating States.

We call on the authorities in Chişinău and Tiraspol to refrain from unilateral steps that could exacerbate the already difficult situation in the Transdniestrian settlement. Some optimism is inspired by the decisions mentioned in the report to reduce the number of posts deployed by the Transdniestrian side in the Security Zone against the backdrop of the coronavirus pandemic; to establish procedures allowing Moldovan farmers unimpeded access to farmlands in the Dubăsari district, and also allowing teachers and

students to reach Transdnestrian Latin-script schools; and to provide opportunities for left bank residents with Moldovan passports to vote in the forthcoming election of the President of the Republic.

We believe that the recent mutual grievances about the activities of the law enforcement agencies can also be resolved through the constructive attitude of the Sides. It should be noted that the problem itself is not new and tends to become more acute following developments in the negotiation process. At the same time, the Sides have had positive experiences of co-operation in public order protection issues. Suffice it to recall the Protocol of Intentions on Cooperation of 1994, the Agreement on the Basis of Cooperation between the Ministry of Internal Affairs of the Republic of Moldova and the Internal Affairs Authorities of Transdnestria, concluded in 1999, and also the Comprehensive Programme on Joint Actions to Combat Organized Crime and Illicit Trafficking in Drugs and Arms drawn up on the basis of that Agreement. Guided by these agreements, the Sides were broadly successful in exchanging information on large-scale law enforcement activities and jointly conducted intelligence-gathering and investigative activities in cases of serious crimes with a high public profile. It is important to understand why these mechanisms no longer work, without politicizing the disagreements that exist.

In anticipation of fresh attempts to artificially inflate the situation around the withdrawal of Russian ammunition from the depots in Cobasna, we should like to recall the following. The need to provide the necessary conditions for the resumption of withdrawal and disposal was identified at the OSCE Ministerial Council meeting in Porto in 2002. So far, these conditions have not been present. The participants in the negotiations on the Transdnestrian settlement should do everything in their power to improve the climate in the dialogue between the authorities in Chişinău and Tiraspol, which, in the future, would allow the resumption of work on the arsenals in Cobasna.

In conclusion, we reaffirm Russia's readiness, as a mediator and guarantor State for the settlement of the Transdnestrian problem, to assist the authorities in Chişinău and Tiraspol in their search for compromises, in close co-ordination with the OSCE Chairmanship and other participants in the "5+2" process. We take the view that in the final analysis the effectiveness of mediation efforts depends entirely on the political will of the Sides to seek and find mutually acceptable solutions and to abide by the agreements reached. The objective of external mediation cannot be to force either Side to make concessions. Formulas developed on the basis of pressure are not viable in the long term.

We wish the distinguished Ambassador Neukirch and the OSCE Mission team success in their future work.

Thank you for your attention.