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## **STATEMENT BY THE EUROPEAN UNION AT THE 1199th MEETING OF THE OSCE PERMANENT COUNCIL**

1 November 2018

### **In response to the report by the Head of the OSCE Mission to the Republic of Moldova, Mr. Claus Neukirch**

The European Union congratulates the Head of Mission Claus Neukirch on his appointment and welcomes him for his first report to the Permanent Council. We fully support the quality work carried out by the OSCE Mission to Moldova and are willing to continue the excellent co-operation we had with Mr. Neukirch's predecessor.

The European Union supports a peaceful and comprehensive settlement of the Transdniestrian conflict on the basis of respect for the territorial integrity and sovereignty of the Republic of Moldova within its internationally recognized borders, with a special status for Transdniestria.

The European Union urges the parties to continue to rapidly implement the agreements reached in Rome on 29 and 30 May at the Permanent Conference on Political Issues in the Framework of the Negotiation Process for the Transdniestrian Settlement in the "5+2" format. The considerable progress made there confirms the willingness of the parties to engage constructively on specific issues affecting the daily life of the population.

We welcome the implementation of the agreement on registration plates effective since the opening on 1 September of two vehicle registration offices in Tiraspol and Ribnița. We are pleased to note that since 1 August practically all of the farmers in the Dubăsari region have been able to regain access to their lands in Transdniestria.

Regarding the situation of schools in the Transdniestrian region teaching in the Latin alphabet, we are counting on the Mission's support in attentively monitoring the developments necessary for their normal and sustainable functioning.

With reference to the telecommunications market, criminal cases and freedom of movement, we encourage the parties to achieve progress as soon as possible. We continue to strongly urge the authorities to finalize their internal shared vision for settlement of the conflict.

We trust that all of these results will lead to tangible progress in the three baskets of the agenda agreed for the negotiating process, in particular on the political, institutional and security aspects of the third basket.

As indicated during the adoption of the decision by the United Nations General Assembly on the complete and unconditional withdrawal of foreign military forces from the territory of the Republic of Moldova with respect to the Operational Group of Russian Forces, we recall the importance of completing the process initiated in the framework of the commitments undertaken at the 1999 OSCE Summit in Istanbul. We regret that unauthorized military exercises have taken place in recent months in the security zone and call for the resumption in the near future of discussion on the withdrawal or destruction of Russian ammunition and armaments in Transdnistria, particularly from the depot in Cobasna. We welcome the continued efforts by the Mission to further this process and also appreciate the support it provides to the Joint Control Commission.

We welcome the work by the Mission to improve human rights on both sides of the Dniester, particularly regarding the combating of trafficking in human beings and domestic violence. We fully support the efforts by the authorities in Chişinău to implement a strategy for consolidating inter-ethnic relations so as to build an inclusive and tolerant society.

Progress needs to be made in the implementation of the Law on the Special Legal Status of Gagauzia. The European Union calls on the authorities in Chişinău to complete the suspended legislative initiatives.

In the run-up to the legislative elections planned for February 2019, we also recall the importance of implementing all of the recommendations formulated by the OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights that have not yet been put into practice.

The European Union expects the Moldovan authorities to guarantee the independence of the judiciary in accordance with its international commitments, it being one of the fundamental principles of the rule of law, an essential element of democracy and a long-held expectation of the country's citizens.

We thank the Head of Mission Mr. Neukirch and wish him every success in his new function.

The candidate countries the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia<sup>1</sup>, Montenegro<sup>1</sup> and Albania<sup>1</sup>, the country of the Stabilisation and Association Process and potential candidate Bosnia and Herzegovina, the European Free Trade Association countries and members of the European Economic Area Iceland, Liechtenstein and Norway, as well as Andorra, align themselves with this statement.

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