

**STATEMENT BY THE EUROPEAN UNION
IN RESPONSE TO BRIGADIER-GENERAL FERENC BANFI
AT THE MEETING OF THE OSCE PERMANENT COUNCIL**

25 January 2007

The European Union would like to welcome Brigadier-General Ferenc Banfi. We should also like to thank him for having agreed to keep the participating States informed by appearing before the Permanent Council for the second time since the establishment of the European Union Border Assistance Mission to Moldova and Ukraine (EUBAM) to provide an update on its activities.

The statement that we have just heard is evidence of the commitment within the European Union to the strengthening of regional security, co-operation and stability through its Neighbourhood Policy. While helping Ukraine and Moldova to do a better job of controlling their common border, including the Transdniestrian section, and to enhance their ability to combat illicit trafficking, the European Union is working at the same time to promote the rule of law and to contribute to finding a just and peaceful resolution to the situation in Transdnistria.

We are particularly gratified to note the outstanding co-operation between the EUBAM and the Ukrainian and Moldovan authorities, and also with the OSCE Mission in Chisinau.

We are especially pleased to see the first tangible signs of the strengthening of border controls resulting from closer ties between the competent Moldovan and Ukrainian administrative authorities and an improvement in their operating procedures, at the initiative of the EUBAM. In this respect, the signing of a series of protocols last November regarding the exchange of information between the customs services and border guards of the two States represents an important step forward.

Recalling its strong commitment to promoting the implementation of the Joint Declaration of the Moldovan and Ukrainian Prime Ministers on Customs Matters, the European Union is pleased to see the efforts being made by the authorities in Chisinau to take into account the economic interests of Transdniestrian businesses that are engaged in legitimate commercial activities. The European Union will continue to lend its full support to the Ukrainian and Moldovan authorities to help them ensure the smooth functioning of the customs regime in conformity with international norms and procedures.

Mr. Chairman,

I should like to take this opportunity to emphasize once again the European Union's commitment to a negotiated settlement of the Transdniestrian conflict based on respect for the sovereignty and territorial integrity of the Republic of Moldova. Repeating its strong endorsement of co-mediation by the head of the OSCE Mission, the European Union urges the parties concerned, particularly the authorities in Tiraspol, to redouble their efforts to revive as quickly as possible the 5+2 negotiation process, which has been suspended for nearly a year. In this connection, the European Union supports the initiative to convene the meeting in the 3+2 format, which is taking place today in Madrid.

The candidate countries Turkey, Croatia and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia*; the countries of the Stabilisation and Association Process and potential candidate countries Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina and Serbia; the European Free Trade Association country Norway, member of the European Economic Area; as well as Ukraine and the Republic of Moldova align themselves with this statement.

* Croatia and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia continue to be part of the Stabilisation and Association Process.