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**STATEMENT BY
MR. MAXIM BUYAKEVICH, DEPUTY PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF
THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION, AT THE 1398th MEETING OF THE
OSCE PERMANENT COUNCIL**

10 November 2022

In response to the report by the Head of the OSCE Mission to the Republic of Moldova

Mr. Chairperson,

We are pleased to welcome Ambassador Kelly Keiderling to the Permanent Council as the new Head of the OSCE Mission to the Republic of Moldova and thank her for the report she has presented. Despite the fact that Ambassador Keiderling has only recently taken up her duties in Chişinău, the report is balanced and informative, focusing on the main “painful points” of the Transdniestrian settlement process. We should like to comment on some aspects.

As in the report presented in April by the previous Head of Mission, Mr. Claus Neukirch, it is reiterated in the current document that “the ‘5+2’ format is on hold”. Overall, we are in agreement with this characterization. At the same time, it would seem fair to mention that the negotiation process did not lose its momentum now but much earlier. Suffice it to recall that the last meeting of the Permanent Conference on Political Issues in the Framework of the Negotiation Process for the Transdniestrian Settlement in the “5+2” format was held in October 2019. In other words, the hiatus is now in its fourth year. And this is despite the call in the Tirana Ministerial Statement of 4 December 2020 to hold such a meeting “as soon as possible” and the concern expressed at the Ministerial Council meeting in Stockholm on 3 December 2021 that such a meeting had yet to take place.

Nor did the disagreements between the authorities in Chişinău and Tiraspol mentioned in the report, including disagreements on subjects from the “Berlin-plus package”, occur just yesterday either. With regard to gas and electricity supplies, we believe it is important to stress that this problem is a commercial one and not a political one. In the same context, we should like to draw the attention of the distinguished Head of Mission to the inadmissibility of using non-consensus language (“the war against Ukraine”) in official documents.

As far as supplies of medical goods, fertilizers and pesticides to the left bank are concerned, this problem has persisted for seven months now owing to the Moldovan Government’s inability or unwillingness to remove bureaucratic obstacles. We support the Mission’s call to find an appropriate mechanism for resolving this essentially humanitarian issue as swiftly as possible.

As for the Transdniestrian side setting up checkpoints in the Security Zone, we should like to emphasize that, as indicated in the report, these measures were taken in response to terrorist threats, the reality of which was unfortunately confirmed in the spring and summer period. And these fears, as we understand it, have not yet been allayed.

We find it inappropriate to include in the report the issue of checks by members of the Russian contingent of the Joint Peacekeeping Forces (JPKF) of the identity documents of Mission personnel when passing through checkpoints, which on a number of occasions allegedly resulted in delays for the monitoring teams. As rightly pointed out in the report itself, such checks are carried out in full compliance with the JPKF instructions.

Finally, let us turn to the question of the withdrawal and disposal of military equipment. We are obliged to repeat once again that this is a matter for bilateral Russian-Moldovan relations, with account taken of the opinion of the authorities in Tiraspol. We are ready to discuss these issues with our Moldovan partners, too, when conditions are acceptable for this.

We have taken note of the sections of the report dealing with human rights and freedom of the media. We are grateful to the Mission for reflecting in the report the case of Russian journalists being denied entry to the Republic of Moldova for spurious reasons. Unfortunately, this is not an isolated incident, confirming the deterioration of the situation regarding freedom of the media in this country. For example, since March of this year there has been a ban on the broadcasting of Russian news and current affairs programmes under the pretext of “combating disinformation”, and since 1 August the Moldovan Intelligence and Security Service has blocked access to the Russian website Svobodnaya Pressa (Free Press).

Ambassador Keiderling,

I should like to hear your answer to a question that we asked your predecessor as well: why is it important to engage with the Women’s Advisory Board, which has not yet even been established, and what exactly is the added value of it from the point of view of the political settlement process? It is stated in the report that this body, which is not part of the Transdniestrian settlement mechanism, will supposedly make recommendations and offer advice on the settlement process. Perhaps this would be worth discussing in more detail.

We note the Mission’s targeted efforts to promote confidence-building between the two banks of the Dniester. In particular, the Mission’s support for the training of Transdniestrian health professionals and the development of a practical guide for students from Transdniestria who plan to continue their studies at Moldovan institutions of higher education seem important. The organization of Model OSCE for Youth seminars is also a promising approach to establishing contacts between young people and building links for the future. Such practices are certainly worth continuing.

The Mission’s assistance in the preparation of history textbooks for Moldovan schools and of an optional course on the Holocaust is also of interest. As noted, these materials will soon be published and distributed to schools throughout the country. We would be grateful for an opportunity to familiarize ourselves with these textbooks, at least in an electronic version.

Finally, we should like to point out that we share the Mission’s desire to step up efforts to facilitate a settlement of the Transdniestrian conflict. The Russian Federation has also continued to take appropriate steps, notably in bilateral formats.

In concluding, we should like once again to welcome you, Ms. Keiderling, as Head of Mission, to express our readiness for close co-operation and to wish you and the team you lead health and success in your work.

Thank you for your attention.