



United States Mission to the OSCE

Response to the Report by the Head of the OSCE Mission to Moldova

As delivered by Ambassador Michael Carpenter
to the Permanent Council, Vienna
April 27, 2023

Ambassador Keiderling, dear Kelly, it's a pleasure to welcome you back to the Permanent Council. Thank you for your comprehensive report. We remain committed to Moldova's democratic path towards full integration with Europe, towards supporting Moldova's rule of law and anti-corruption reforms, and helping the country to peacefully settle the Transnistria conflict with full respect for Moldova's sovereignty and territorial integrity within its internationally recognized borders.

Moldova's impressive strides in strengthening rule of law and democracy come against an unsettling backdrop of Russia's war against neighboring Ukraine, which has direct impacts on Moldova's economy, energy situation, and national security. Moldovans understand better than most that Russia has for years blatantly disregarded the sovereignty, territorial integrity, and political independence of its neighbors, including Moldova, through various malign efforts to undermine democratic institutions. That is why it is so critical that the OSCE Mission, the OSCE's autonomous institutions, and all of our international partners invest in helping to strengthen Moldova's democratic resilience and its ability to resist hybrid tools of destabilization such as cyberattacks, dark money operations, disinformation, and other so-called "active measures." The United States is committed to countering such actions and holding outside actors accountable for any unlawful influence operations.

Mr. Chair, as in Georgia, Ukraine, and elsewhere, Russia continues to station troops on Moldova's soil without the host country's consent – nearly 25 years after it pledged to withdraw its troops and ammunition at the 1999 OSCE Summit in Istanbul. This is a security concern not just for Moldova, but for the entire OSCE region.

Ambassador Keiderling, thank you for hosting my visit to the Mission's premises. I was able to see firsthand how the Mission's staff works diligently to provide objective information and transparency on the situation on the ground. Its monitoring function in the Security Zone is indeed crucial and highly professional. To fulfill your Mission's mandate, it is critical that the OSCE personnel be granted freedom of movement throughout the country and unimpeded access to all sites in or adjacent to the Security Zone – including the Cobasna weapons depot. Unimpeded access to this depot and munitions stockpiles at the Tiraspol airport is not a bilateral issue as Russia likes to claim – it is an issue of regional security and one of direct concern to the OSCE. If Russia truly has nothing to hide, then it is high time it allowed the Mission access to Cobasna and the stockpiles it moved to the Tiraspol airport. The United States stands ready to assist Moldova, the OSCE, and other partners with the removal and disposal of these munitions.

Mr. Chair, Moldova has generously provided safety and shelter to over 850,000 refugees from Ukraine, the vast majority of whom are women and children who had to flee their

homes due to Russia's brutal full-scale invasion. We commend the government and people of Moldova for their ongoing humanitarian assistance, including measures to help prevent human trafficking to the over 106,000 refugees who remain in Moldova, many of them in private homes. The Mission's support to the government and local partners includes the provision of services on both banks of the Nistru River to host country and refugee survivors of gender-based violence, including conflict-related sexual violence. This support exemplifies the positive impact the OSCE's field missions can have on the ground. We also commend the Mission's active cooperation with the Office of the Special Representative and Coordinator for Combating Trafficking in Human Beings and look forward to hearing more about the outcomes of the first ever national simulation you are preparing in coordination with 10 government agencies and civil society.

Mr. Chair, we also applaud Moldova's remarkable progress on its ambitious reform program to strengthen its democracy, reform institutions that advance rule of law and counter corruption, and its effort to address discrimination and hate-based crime to create a more inclusive and equitable society. The enactment and effective implementation of strong anti-corruption measures will benefit all Moldovans. We encourage Moldova to take advantage of the support that its international and national partners can provide and to consult widely with civil society, the OSCE, international experts, and others to ensure that legislation is in line with international standards and Moldova's commitments. We encourage Moldova to implement the Venice Commission's recommendations once they're issued. Separately, we note the release of Oleg Horjan in December 2022, and of Adrian Glijn earlier this month, and urge the release of others unjustly detained by the de facto authorities in Transnistria.

Mr. Chair, Ambassador Keiderling, the United States attaches great importance to the work of the OSCE Mission to Moldova in support of the settlement process. This is a highly delicate process and requires painstaking coordination. We recognize the difficult circumstances and high degree of uncertainty in which you and your team are working and call for a swift prolongation of the Mission's mandate. Please be assured that the United States will continue to support the Mission, and will find ways to support the OSCE's activities in Moldova no matter what games the Russian Federation chooses to play with the mandate. I would like to conclude by reiterating the United States' support for a peaceful resolution of the Transnistrian conflict based on Moldova's sovereignty and territorial integrity within its internationally recognized borders and welcome Moldova's strong commitment to a democratic future anchored in Europe.

Actually, I said lastly, but one more thing to respond to the Secretary General's comments. Let me remind colleagues that the failure to finalize a Unified Budget remains the choice of just a few participating States refusing to negotiate in good faith. It is frankly outrageous that this Organization is expected to stay afloat with a budget from 2021, a budget that was, in real terms, cut by 26% from 2011. OSCE staff, both international and local staff, are dedicated professionals. We just heard about the staff at the Mission to Moldova, which exemplify this professionalism. They do not deserve to be subject to the political whims of a few self-serving States.

Madam Secretary General, I appreciate your continuing efforts to provide the Permanent Council with updated information on OSCE finances, particularly as several executive structures will soon face a deficit. Please keep us informed.

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