

STATEMENT
by H.E. Mr. Nicu Popescu, Deputy Prime Minister, Minister
of Foreign Affairs and European Integration of the Republic of Moldova,
at the 28th OSCE Ministerial Council

Stockholm, 2 December 2021

Madame Chair,
Dear Colleagues,

I would like to join previous speakers in expressing gratitude to the Swedish OSCE Chairpersonship, personally to Minister Ann Linde, for organizing this Ministerial Council meeting in these challenging times of pandemic.

Madam Chair,

It was here, in Stockholm, back in 1992, when the ministers participating at the 3rd CSCE Ministerial Council committed “to use the CSCE to consolidate human rights, democracy, the rule of law and economic freedom, as the foundation for peace, security and stability and to prevent, manage and solve conflicts”. These commitments are among the core elements of the European Security order. Regretfully, many of these commitments still need to be implemented.

For the Republic of Moldova, that Council bears a special significance, as it adopted the first ever consensual Ministerial language referring to Moldova, stating, in particular, that “*a final political settlement of the conflict should be reached in order to establish durable peace in the region*”. While the situation in my country on the ground has been peaceful for almost three decades, little progress has been made towards fulfilling the objective set 29 years ago - achieving a final political settlement of the conflict in the Transnistrian region of the Republic of Moldova. We reaffirm the need to achieve a comprehensive, peaceful and sustainable settlement of the Transnistrian conflict based on the sovereignty and territorial integrity of the Republic of Moldova within its internationally recognized borders with a special status for Transnistrian region. We are glad that this goal will be reiterated in the OSCE Ministerial Statement on the negotiations in the 5+2 format.

At the same time, efforts should continue towards resolving, where possible, urgent issues and easing life of citizens residing in the region. Here are some examples – the Moldovan authorities shared with the Transnistrian region more than 300.000 doses of anti-Covid-19 vaccines. Also, on the issue of transport, which is discussed in the negotiation process, we are glad that the number of residents from the region applying for neutral number plates has tripled. We remain committed to work on other issues related to the transport area in line with our international commitments and relevant legislation.

However, as a general remark, many problems that the Transnistrian region is facing will only be resolved in the framework of a comprehensive political solution.

Madam Chair,

A special area of our concerns is the further deterioration of the situation of human rights in the Transnistrian region. This issue was raised many times in the Permanent Council over the last years. The ongoing violation of human rights and fundamental freedoms in the region must stop. We also count on your active support and involvement in curbing the cases of political pressure on any dissenting voice, illegal detentions, and convictions, as well as in releasing political prisoners. The issue of ensuring appropriate conditions for functioning of the Latin script schools in the region should be also resolved.

Dear Colleagues,

In December 1992, the Stockholm Ministerial Council adopted a decision that referred for the first time to the issue of the Russian troops withdrawal from the Republic of Moldova. In particular, it envisaged “*the early, orderly and complete withdrawal of foreign troops*”. Let me recall that the continued presence of the so-called Operative Group of Russian Troops and stockpiles of munitions in Cobasna has no legal ground, is in contradiction with the international commitments and the permanent neutrality status of the Republic of Moldova.

In this context, we reiterate our readiness to engage in a constructive dialogue to follow up at a practical level on the initiative launched two years ago by the Russian Federation regarding the disposal of the non-transportable munitions. This process should be conducted in a transparent manner and the OSCE could play a relevant role in accordance with its mandate. This would be an important step towards resumption of the withdrawal of the Russian troops, military equipment, and ammunition from the territory of the Republic of Moldova in accordance with its long-standing commitments. We also need to keep on agenda the issue of transformation of the current peacekeeping mechanism into a multinational civilian mission under an appropriate international mandate.

In conclusion, I would like to thank once again the Swedish Chairpersonship for their efforts in 2021 and express our strong support for the incoming Polish Chairmanship.

Thank you