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**STATEMENT BY
THE EUROPEAN UNION AT THE 1371st MEETING OF THE
OSCE PERMANENT COUNCIL**

28 April 2022

**In response to the report by the Head of the OSCE Mission to Moldova,
Claus Neukirch**

The European Union welcomes the Head of the OSCE Mission to Moldova and thanks him for his report. We should like to thank the Mission for continuing to implement its mandate effectively despite the repercussions in the Republic of Moldova of Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine. The continuation of its monitoring activities and the publication of its reports in a professional and impartial manner are more important than ever. We are particularly grateful for the Mission's role in supporting the evacuation of the teams of the OSCE Special Monitoring Mission to Ukraine.

We are particularly concerned about the incidents in the Transdniestrian region over the past few days. The European Union calls on all relevant actors, including those from the Transdniestrian region, to refrain from any action that could lead to an escalation of tensions and undermine the peace. We welcome the responsible and balanced approach by the authorities in Chişinău and reiterate in that context our full support for the stability, sovereignty and territorial integrity of the Republic of Moldova in the face of possible destabilization risks to it. We call on the Mission to continue to monitor the situation in the Security Zone and to report regularly on incidents that occur there. We reiterate our appeal for strict adherence to the rules established by the Joint Control Commission (JCC) in the Security Zone. We are particularly concerned about the unprecedented incident of 14 April, during which the Chişinău delegation to the JCC was detained for over an hour by the *de facto* Transdniestrian authorities.

The European Union greatly appreciates the generosity shown by the Republic of Moldova in receiving refugees fleeing Russia's war against Ukraine. The European Union and its Member States fully support the Republic of Moldova in this effort, notably through 13 million euros in humanitarian aid, 30 million euros in support of the management of the refugee situation and 150 million euros in support of macroeconomic stability. On 5 April, Germany hosted the donor conference of the Moldova Support Platform, also co-chaired by France and Romania, to strengthen international aid for the Republic of Moldova. On that occasion, the European Commission and several Member States announced additional aid, including a 53 million euro budget support programme. We welcome the continuation of the support process for the Republic of Moldova initiated by the Platform and the organization by Romania of the next conference.

The European Union reiterates its support for a peaceful, comprehensive and lasting 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. We continue

to support the efforts by the Special Representative of the OSCE Chairperson-in-Office towards a comprehensive and lasting settlement of the conflict.

We also continue to strongly support the highly ambitious Government reform programme, particularly in the area of the rule of law, justice system reform and the fight against corruption.

The European Union expects tangible progress to be achieved in the three “baskets” of the agenda agreed for the negotiation process, in particular on the political, institutional and security aspects of the third basket, but is obliged to note the current impossibility of organizing meetings in the “5+2” format in the context of Russia’s military aggression against Ukraine. The European Union welcomes the continued discussions in the working groups to resolve concrete issues of importance to the people on both banks of the Dniester. We welcome the efforts by the Government in Chişinău to identify solutions to the issues raised by the authorities in Tiraspol. It is vital that all parties in the “5+2” format continue to respect the sovereignty and territorial integrity of the Republic of Moldova.

The European Union remains committed to respect for human rights and the full implementation of the package of confidence-building measures. We recall our concerns regarding the deterioration of the human rights situation in the Moldovan region of Transnistria and emphasize the importance of respect for international standards and OSCE commitments as regards human rights and fundamental freedoms. We are also very concerned about the restrictions imposed by the authorities in Tiraspol on official visits by representatives of the authorities of the Republic of Moldova to prisons in the Transnistrian region and on visits by journalists and human rights defenders. We urge the self-proclaimed authorities of the Transnistrian region to re-establish full freedom of movement between the two banks of the Dniester.

As indicated at the time of the adoption of the United Nations General Assembly resolution 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 embarked on as part of the commitments undertaken at the OSCE Istanbul Summit in 1999.

Owing to the high risk posed by weapons and ammunition depots, particularly by the one in Cobasna, we have taken note on several occasions of the statements by the Russian Federation announcing its intention to destroy the ammunition from this depot. We hope that this operation will take place as early as possible. We recall that the OSCE has a mandate and the means to contribute to the withdrawal or destruction of Russian ammunition and armaments from the Transnistrian region, and its involvement is essential to the transparency and international verification of these operations.

We support the Mission’s efforts to strengthen its work in combating gender-based violence and trafficking in human beings, particularly in the context of the influx of Ukrainian refugees, the vast majority of whom are women and children, and to ensure gender mainstreaming in all its activities.

The European Union stands ready to support the authorities in Chişinău in the implementation of the 1994 Law on the Special Legal Status of Gagauzia, in order to strengthen the institutional functioning of this region within the Republic of Moldova.

The European Union remains at the side of the Republic of Moldova, and we shall continue to provide assistance, be it in the framework of the Eastern Partnership, the Association Agreement, the Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Area, the visa exemption regime or aid in overcoming the COVID-19 epidemic. The European Union will continue to make this aid contingent on concrete results of reform, with a view to bringing tangible benefits to the citizens of the Republic of Moldova. At the same time, the European Union and its Member States remain ready to continue to provide rapid assistance to the Republic

of Moldova adapted to its pressing needs to enable it to deal with the repercussions of the war in Ukraine. The European Union stands by the Republic of Moldova and acknowledges its European aspirations and its choice to turn towards Europe, in accordance with the Association Agreement. The Republic of Moldova is part of our European family.

We reaffirm our strong commitment to move to a new level in our future-oriented co-operation with the Republic of Moldova, which remains based on common core values and shared aspirations for peace, freedom, democracy and prosperity.

The candidate countries Turkey, the Republic of North Macedonia¹, Montenegro¹ and Albania¹, 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 and Liechtenstein, as well as Ukraine, the Republic of Moldova, Georgia and Andorra, align themselves with this statement.

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