

Report by Head of OSCE Mission to Moldova: UK response, November 2022

Thank you, Mr Chair, and welcome Ambassador Keiderling to the Permanent Council. Thank you for your report.

Russia's unprovoked and unjustified invasion of Ukraine has had a significant impact on Moldova, the region and globally. Moldovans have shown generosity and hospitality to more than half a million refugees, including around 90,000 who remain in the country. To echo President Sandu's words, Moldova is living the reality of a devastating war at its borders. A war that is killing innocent people in Ukraine and endangering regional stability and European Security. Russian missiles targeting Ukrainian infrastructure have infringed Moldovan airspace and territory and, because of the war, Moldova is going through a major energy crisis with winter looming. Gazprom's decision to reduce supply of gas to Moldova is unjustified and appears to be designed to cause hardship to citizens on both banks of the Nistru river.

Ambassador, we thank the OSCE Mission for your continued efforts in monitoring the Security Zone and we underline the importance of freedom of movement of Mission members in order to carry out this important function.

We agree with your assessment of the importance of ongoing talks between Chisinau and Tiraspol and thank the Mission for its support to, and facilitation of, 1+1 meetings. With citizens on both sides of the Nistru united in their desire for peace and security, the current situation provides grounds for optimism that we might soon see movement towards a settlement of the conflict which respects Moldova's sovereignty and territorial integrity within its internationally recognised borders, and with a special status for Transnistria.

The Mission's 'Conflict Prevention and Resolution programme' remains vitally important, including on confidence building measures and preventing and reducing tensions, as well as monitoring and investigating efforts. We regret that there have been, again, no developments in the withdrawal of illegally deployed Russian troops and ammunition. We once again call on Russia to remove its forces stationed in the Transnistrian region of the Republic of Moldova without host nation consent, in accordance with UN General Assembly Resolutions. And we call on Russia to urgently formulate a proposal for resumption of the process of removal and destruction of ammunition from the Cobasna site. The continued presence of the ammunition at the site is a concern and is due to Russia's refusal to engage over many years. Russia would bear the responsibility for the human and environmental tragedy that would ensue in the event of an accident.

Ambassador, we echo your call for the sides to work towards full implementation of the "Berlin-plus package", including on number plates, telecommunications and access to farmlands. We are pleased by the Mission's continued efforts on Women Peace and Security including through skills

enhancing workshops with members of the Joint Expert Working Groups. We encourage a continued focus on the human rights situation on both sides of the Nistru, particularly with regards to freedom of expression on the left bank. We echo your concerns about the amendments introducing criminal liability for complaints made against Transnistrian authorities, which will discourage the filing of complaints, not only to the Moldovan authorities but also to international institutions. We support your ongoing work to ensure access to justice for victims of gender-based violence, including human trafficking and other serious and organised crime.

The United Kingdom remains committed to supporting Moldova in its reform agenda. We welcome OSCE's participation in the Anti-corruption Working Group of the Moldova Support Platform, which the UK is pleased to co-chair with our Romanian colleagues under strategic direction of the Moldovan authorities.

Finally, Ambassador Keiderling, I would like to thank you for your strong leadership during your initial few months. I also thank the Mission staff, as well as Special Representative Mayr-Harting, for their dedication and professionalism during a difficult year. The United Kingdom will continue to support you and the Mission in fulfilling your mandate and to support peace and stability for the people of Moldova over the coming year and beyond.