

STATEMENT

by H. E. Mr. Andrei STRATAN, Deputy Prime Minister,
Minister of Foreign Affairs and European Integration of the Republic of Moldova,
at the 16th OSCE Ministerial Council
(Helsinki, 4-5 December 2008)

Mr. Chairman,
Dear colleagues,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is a pleasure to meet you again in this beautiful city with special symbolic meanings for our Organization and to thank the Finnish authorities for the excellent organization of this Ministerial Council. I hope that here, in Helsinki, we will succeed to respond to some major security concerns on the European continent that trouble us for a long time now.

Mr. Chairman,

In those 33 years of activity, OSCE has beyond any doubts undeniable merits in promoting a climate of security and cooperation at a large scale. At the same time, we have to recognize that in recent years our Organization is facing serious problems generated, in particular, by persistence of threats and increased risks to security raised by unresolved separatist conflicts and by the contested regime of conventional weapons in Europe. Regretfully, our concerns regarding these challenges, on which we have repeatedly warned the international community, have been amplified by the last August's events in the Caucasus.

We are now in a crucial moment when the OSCE has to demonstrate its viability, effectively contributing to peaceful settlement of the conflicts while respecting the sovereignty, territorial integrity and internationally recognized borders of states. The consistent application of these principles contained in the United Nations Charter and Helsinki Final Act is the key to achieving a sustainable settlement of the conflicts and implicitly to ensuring security on the European continent. The viability of our Organization directly depends on its capacity to ensure the respect *in bona fide* by all Member States of their commitments assumed within this framework. Artificially feeding regional conflicts and delaying the process of their settlement, including of the Transnistrian conflict, are reprovable and counter productive.

Mr. Chairman,

According to a widely opinion spread at the international level, the Transnistrian conflict, unlike other conflicts in former Soviet area, is less complex, therefore it could be solved much more easily. As a basis for such assertion serves the fact that there are no ethnic or religious contradictions at the origin of the Transnistrian conflict that could add a particular complexity to the settlement process. Nevertheless, we have to state with regret that, in spite of efforts made during the last 17 years with a strong

involvement of major international actors, the Transnistrian problem so far remains an unresolved one. We believe that the failure of our efforts can be explained first of all by the lack of adequate political will on the part of some actors involved, and by the eminently geopolitical nature of the Transnistrian problem.

During the last two years we have consistently promoted a comprehensive approach, "in package", of all conflict related issues – political, economic, social and humanitarian ones, taking into account the interests of all factors concerned. The proposed strategy includes drafting and adoption in the 5+2 format of a special legal status for the Transnistrian region within the Republic of Moldova; strengthening the neutrality status and withdrawal of foreign troops from the country's territory; recognition of ownership rights and offering reliable guarantees for the population from the region.

In our opinion, the military contingents introduced in conflict area in accordance with the Cease Fire Agreement of 1992 have completed their goals long time ago. In this context, I would like to reiterate our proposal regarding the necessity to replace the current operation in the Transnistrian region with a civil multinational mission with an international mandate. The willingness of the Republic of Moldova to demilitarize itself will undoubtedly have a beneficial effect on strengthening confidence and security in the region and, implicitly, on the settlement process.

Mr. Chairman,

The Moldovan authorities highly appreciate the direct involvement of the European Union in overcoming the security challenges in our region. In this sense, I would particularly like to mention the activity of the EU Border Assistance Mission to Moldova and Ukraine, which brings a valuable contribution to securing the Moldovan-Ukrainian state border, particularly on its Transnistrian segment. I would like to reiterate the readiness of the Moldovan Government to continuously support the population and companies from the Transnistrian region, including through programs of assistance and facilitation of foreign trade offered by the EU.

We fully share the concerns expressed by our colleagues about the critical situation of the Adapted CFE Treaty which we all consider it as a cornerstone of the European security. Withdrawal of the Russian military forces and ammunition from Moldova, in compliance with the obligations undertaken in the framework of the OSCE Summits, must take place unconditionally, completely and transparently. We highly appreciate the continued engagement of OSCE Member States that have contributed to the OSCE's Voluntary Fund for Moldova to support the withdrawal process.

Ladies and gentlemen,

Remaining faithful to the commitments assumed within the OSCE and the Council of Europe, the Republic of Moldova will continue to promote consistently democratic reforms in order to ensure the rule of law, respect for human rights and fundamental

freedoms. I use this opportunity to invite you to send observers to the upcoming elections for the Parliament of the Republic of Moldova.

Finally, I would like to wish success to the future Chairman-in-Office of the OSCE, our Greek colleague, Minister Dora Bakoyannis, assuring her of our full-fledged support in carrying its mandate.

Thank you for your attention.