

STATEMENT

by H.E. Mr. Nicu Popescu, Deputy Prime Minister, Minister
of Foreign Affairs and European Integration of the Republic of Moldova,
at the 30th OSCE Ministerial Council
Skopje, 30 November 2023

Mr. Chairperson,

Secretary General,

Dear colleagues,

This Organization has been founded almost 50 years ago, being led by the idea that security in Europe could be achieved only through a collective commitment to resolving disputes in a peaceful manner and in accordance with the international law.

Today, we continue to be very far from this goal. The Russia's unprovoked and unjustified aggression against Ukraine continues to be the challenge number one to security, peace and prosperity in Europe. Daily suffering caused to Ukrainian citizens, daily attacks on its civilian infrastructure cannot and should not be accepted as a daily routine. Therefore, it is essential to increase support to Ukraine in its existential struggle to restore sovereignty and territorial integrity. The Republic of Moldova will continue to provide its political, economic, humanitarian assistance as well as shelter over 90.000 Ukrainian refugees.

Our overarching common goal is to achieve a sustainable and just peace in Ukraine. But to be sustainable and just it should be based on the criteria set out in the Peace Formula put forward by President Zelenskyy, which Moldova strongly supports.

Referring to the other frozen conflicts in the OSCE area, the Republic of Moldova expresses its unwavering support for Georgia's sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity within its internationally recognized borders and firmly rejects Russia's recognition of the Georgian regions of Abkhazia and Tskhinvali region/South Ossetia, as well as its military presence.

Turning for a moment to the Middle East, let me stress that Moldova strongly condemned the ferocious terrorist attacks committed by Hamas on October 7th. We support the right of Israel for self-defence within the framework of the international law and humanitarian conventions. The recent release of hostages is a positive development. The terrorists must be defeated with due respect to the lives and humanitarian conditions of the civilian population in Gaza.

Dear colleagues,

Moldova does not face an imminent military threat, unlike Ukraine, but is fully exposed to a wide range of hybrid attacks. Despite a stream of illegal finances from abroad in support of corrupt political groups and disinformation campaigns we are doing our utmost to strengthen democracy and rule of law. This malign interference will not divert us from our strategic goal of joining the EU.

The European Commission recommendation to open EU accession negotiations with Moldova is a clear testimony to our efforts. While we are looking forward to a positive decision by the European Council, Moldovan authorities are working hard to prepare the country for the accession talks. We are focused both on fulfilling remaining aspects related to the justice reform and anti-corruption as well as building the necessary administrative capacity.

Moldovan economy is already closely linked to the EU markets and our next priority is strengthening infrastructure and energy connections. The future of the Republic of Moldova lies in the European Union, and we will do everything needed to achieve this goal.

Despite all the challenges, we have managed to maintain the peace throughout Moldova, including in the Transnistrian region.

Even if the dialogue is not easy and issues are often getting artificially politicized by Tiraspol, our commitment to a peaceful and political settlement is unshaken. The solution should be based on the respect for the sovereignty and territorial integrity of the Republic of Moldova within its internationally recognized borders. It is important to prepare a proper ground for the settlement and one of the priorities in this sense is to continue gradual integration of the Transnistrian region into the legal and policy space of the Republic of Moldova. The OSCE Mission to Moldova brings a valuable contribution to the conflict resolution process and we hope it will continue its work.

In the same context, the illegally stationed Russian forces as well as Cobasna ammunition depots continues to pose a significant risk. I am reiterating the call for the unconditional withdrawal of the Russian forces, in line with the relevant OSCE commitments adopted in Istanbul in 1999, as well as the United Nations General Assembly Resolution 72/282, and in respect of Moldova's constitutional neutrality.

In conclusion, allow me to join the previous speakers in expressing appreciation to the Macedonian Chairmanship-in-Office and personally to Minister Bujar Osmani, for his dedicated work and commitment in this challenging year for the OSCE. Moldova is committed to the multilateral rules-based order and to the European security architecture based on respect for Helsinki Final Act. I wish all the success to the incoming Maltese Chairmanship in office.

Thank you.