

STATEMENT

***by Mr. Valeriu Mija, State Secretary, Ministry of Foreign Affairs,
at the 31st meeting of the OSCE Ministerial Council
(Malta, 5-6 December 2024)***

Dear Chairperson,
Dear distinguished colleagues,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

I would like to join the previous speakers in expressing our gratitude to the Maltese Chairpersonship and to H.E. Dr. Ian Borg personally, for the work accomplished in 2024 and to congratulate the whole team for its tireless efforts in leading the Organization during these difficult times.

Mr. Chairperson,

The Helsinki Final Act, that so many have referred to, laid the foundations for the post-Cold War world and codified the basic norms of behaviour to ensure comprehensive security and order in the OSCE region. The document set forth the basic principles guiding states relations, as well as respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms. More than thirty years ago, particularly when the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe turned into the OSCE, emerged a decisive opportunity and hope to develop a common regional cooperative security. Indeed, many countries grew stronger, developing robust democratic institutions, resilient civil society, in which the OSCE played a key role.

In the meantime, we all need to admit that we failed to promptly and preventively react in regions of conflict. As a result, now, we are witnessing a big tragedy - Russia's ruthless war against Ukraine, which has serious repercussions on our common European security. This deep crisis has limited the Organisation's political room for manoeuvre and reduced even more the possibility to apply its conflict toolbox. Furthermore, by misusing the decision-making mechanism of our co-operation – the consensus – and by blocking important decisions for the sake of national interest only, the Organization became weaker, with reduced functionality to pursue its mandate.

On our side, we strongly believe the OSCE has a potential, and we must preserve it. For this reason, we should all deliver and ensure necessary conditions to accomplish the Organization's mission.

Honourable audience,

Numerous atrocities, bombarded cities, horrific human rights abuses are the realities nowadays in the middle of Europe. Day by day, for more than 1000 days, we are witnessing Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine, in blatant violation of international law, the UN Charter and the Helsinki principles. And all this began, in fact, with the illegal annexation of Crimea in February 2014.

Russian deliberate attacks on the energy facilities ahead of the coming winter are yet another breach of international law, relentlessly pursuing its strategy of intimidation against the people of Ukraine.

Let us state clearly – we witness continues violation of basic international principles such as territorial integrity and national sovereignty, through obvious attempt of territory annexations by force.

We urge Russia to cease its aggression, which involves the complete, unconditional and immediate withdrawal of its troops and military equipment from the Ukrainian territory within its internationally recognized borders. We remain steadfast in supporting Ukraine, notably: sheltering hundreds of thousands of refugees for whom we have extended the Temporary Protection Mechanism for another year; working actively within the Solidarity Lanes to facilitate the transit of goods to and from Ukraine; joining international efforts to free abducted Ukrainian children and to investigate Russia illegalities.

Excellencies,

While Moldova does not face an imminent military threat at this moment, unlike Ukraine, for years it has been exposed to a wide range of hybrid attacks. These have culminated in unprecedented Russian interference during the recent presidential elections and constitutional referendum. They have been marked by massive vote buying, organized transportation even by airplanes, massive disinformation and tremendous amounts of cyber-attacks on the electoral infrastructure on the election day.

Moreover, we condemn the continuous violation of the airspace of the Republic of Moldova by Russian missiles' attacks targeting Ukraine, endangering the safety of our citizens. In recent weeks, even several Russian decoy drones have fallen on our territory. This is unacceptable.

Despite these challenges, we stay firm on our path to the European Union, confirmed by the recent constitutional referendum. This year, as a candidate country, we officially started the EU accession negotiation process, focusing on the democratic transformation of the country. We are very grateful to our partners for their assistance offered to Moldova bilaterally, as well as through other support platforms.

And please let me remind you that Transnistrian conflict remains a potential source of instability. Due to the war against Ukraine, the "5+2" negotiation format was put "on hold". Therefore, we continue our dialogue with Tiraspol on the "1+1" basis. We re-affirm our determination to maintain peace on the entire territory of the Republic of Moldova, diffuse political tensions, and seek viable political solutions on many pressing issues. In this regard, we reiterate the important role of the OSCE, including through its Mission to Moldova, and plead for a one-year mandate extension.

Please let me state once again the Republic of Moldova's determination to solving the Transnistrian conflict exclusively through political dialogue and peaceful means, based on the sovereignty and territorial integrity of the country, within its internationally recognized borders.

At the same time, the continuous illegal presence of the Russian military forces in the Transnistrian region remains an infringement of Moldova's sovereignty and Constitutional neutrality. We stay firm on our position and call for the complete and unconditional withdrawal of Russian forces from the territory of the Republic of Moldova in line with the 1999 Istanbul OSCE commitments, as well as the United Nations General Assembly Resolution 72/282.

I would also like to draw your attention to the ammunition storage facility in Cobasna, which remains a major risk factor for Moldova and the entire region. These approximately 20,000 tons of expired ammunitions must be destroyed or withdrawn through a proper, internationally transparent procedure.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Next year we mark the 50th anniversary of the signing of the Helsinki Final Act. To return to the cooperative path that was conceived of nearly a half century ago, all participating States must demonstrate the political will to fully implement our Helsinki commitments through concrete actions, by restoring the trust that the OSCE was founded upon.

Even though OSCE continues to face numerous challenges, which cannot be dealt with in an isolated manner, a common effort is required to overcome Organisation's challenges and deficiencies.

Special thanks go to Minister Borg and his team for their tireless diplomatic efforts during the Presidency, including the identification of the compromise and consensus regarding the top 4 leaders, ensuring the functionality of the Organization.

The Republic of Moldova continues to actively support the efforts of the OSCE as part of our unwavering commitment to maintain a rules-based international order, that should be honoured by all OSCE participating States at all times.

To conclude, we would like to thank the Maltese team for their hospitality provided during this important annual event and wish every success to Finland, which will take over the Chairpersonship of this Organization next month.

Thank you.