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MOLDOVA–UKRAINE COOPERATION: MATTERS OF REGIONAL SECURITY

Recent developments, which we are witnessing, compel the world community to pay ever more attention to the maintenance of international security. Given the ‘traditional threats to global and regional security and new challenges, forcing states to modify their approaches to countering these risks in the interdependent world of today, this topic is naturally rising to the forefront of the international agenda.

The Republic of Moldova and Ukraine are no exception. Our countries have been closely cooperating in strengthening regional security. I would like to emphasize that our joint efforts, yielding tangible results, stem from the intensive high-profile dialogue conducted between our countries, particularly in recent years. Without dwelling on all the niceties of the Moldova–Ukraine partnership in this important area, I would like to primarily focus on two issues, to wit, the mediating role of Ukraine in the Transnistrian settlement process, as well as bilateral cooperation on the common border.

With reference to the Transnistrian conflict settlement, I would like to highlight vigorous and valuable activities and initiatives of Ukraine, aimed at exploring ways for a mutually acceptable solution to this multifaceted problem. We attach great value to the principled and consistent position of Ukraine and are grateful for seconding Moldovan efforts with regard to the political settlement of the Transnistrian conflict, proceeding from the principles of respect for the sovereignty and territorial integrity of the Republic of Moldova along with according special status to the Transnistrian region within Moldova. In this respect, I would also like to highlight intensive work of Viktor Kryzhanivskyi, Special Envoy of Ukraine on the Transnistrian settlement.

Besides its aforementioned complexity, the Transnistrian issue is cross-cutting and has several dimensions, each of them being equally important. Therefore, we attach equal attention to the political, economic and social aspects of the settlement and consistently advocate the discussion of all agenda items of the 5+2 negotiation process, involving mediators and our international partners.

Such an approach has already enabled us to achieve certain progress in addressing various social and economic problems, confronting people on both banks of the Dnister River.



*Участь Прем'єр-міністра Республіки Молдова Павла Філіна та Президента України Петра Порошенка в церемонії відкриття спільного пункту пропуску на молдовсько-українському державному кордоні «Паланка–Маяки–Удобне» 28 грудня 2018 року
Pavel Filip, Prime Minister of the Republic of Moldova, and Petro Poroshenko, President of Ukraine, participate in the opening ceremony of the joint border crossing point at the Moldovan-Ukrainian state border 'Palanka–Maiaky–Udobne', 28 December, 2018*

Concurrently, I would like to point out that Transnistrian economic entities can enjoy all the advantages stipulated by the free trade area between the Republic of Moldova and the European Union. Our citizens, residing in the region and holding Moldovan biometric passports, can enjoy visa-free travels to EU countries.

Nevertheless, any advancement in resolving major issues from the so-called 'third basket' of the 5+2 format with regard to the all-round and stable political settlement of the Transnistrian conflict remains elusive. So is the case with determining the status of the region within the Republic of Moldova. It is to this end that Chisinau's efforts are made, which, in our opinion, will be understandable and acceptable for Tyraspol.

Referring to the unsettled Transnistrian conflict in terms of regional security, we are deeply concerned by the prolonged military presence of Russia in the region and the ammunition stockpiles, which have remained there since the times of Soviet Union. It generates additional risks and security threats, and we openly mention it on all international fora. It is the position of the Republic of Moldova that the Russian armed forces, namely the Operational Group of Russian Forces, be fully withdrawn at the earliest convenience together with the ammunition

stockpiles in accordance with the international obligations of the Russian Federation. At the same time, Chisinau is consistently in favour of transforming the current peacekeeping mission on the Dnister River into a civil mission with an appropriate international mandate.

Another significant factor contributing to the heightened tension in the region is the recent rapid growth in the strength and scale of military drills in Transnistria with the advent of the new element, the deployed Russian forces.

By all accounts, the rapid settlement of all the aforementioned issues is of interest not only for the Republic of Moldova but for the entire region as well. Therefore, we highly appreciate the meaningful dialogue with our Ukrainian partners and Ukraine's support on the international scene.

From the vantage point of international security, it is impossible to omit the utterly complicated situation and unparalleled challenges and threats confronting adjacent Ukraine. The principled position of the Republic of Moldova is well-known and has been reiterated from high rostrums, in particular, the UN. It implies support for the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Ukraine, as well as endeavours to the political and diplomatic conflict resolution in the east of the country and in Crimea.

I would also like to draw your attention to one more important element of the cooperation between the Republic of Moldova and Ukraine in regard to strengthening security on the common state border spanning more than 1,200 km. I will only mention a few aspects. Our countries continue their work on the demarcation process and legal framework of the state border, which is now in its final phase. In this regard, it is worthwhile to mention Ukrainian support of our initiative on the demarcation activities of the Transnistrian part of the border.

In addition, we are proceeding with the implementation of the joint control mechanism on the Moldova–Ukraine border, viewed as specific practical measures on ensuring not only more comfortable conditions during border and customs formalities in accordance with the best international practices but also strengthening security of the common border. At present, the mechanism has been successfully applied in six crossing points, in some of them – for a significant lapse of time.

I am pleased that the advantages of the common border can also be enjoyed by residents and economic entities of the Transnistrian region of the Republic of Moldova, following the inauguration of the 'Pervomaisk–Kuchurgan' motor vehicle crossing point in July 2017. That is our first experience of its kind on the Transnistrian part of the Moldova–Ukraine border and we are pleased that the initiative has proven its worth. Since last year, another crossing point, 'Palanka–Maiaky–Udobne', has been in operation in the joint control regime, being the most modern and well-equipped one after a major reconstruction funded by the European Union and the government of the Republic of Moldova.



*Зустріч Віцепрем'єр-міністерки Республіки Молдова з питань реінтеграції Христини Лесник зі Спеціальним представником України з питань придністровського врегулювання Віктором Крижанівським
Meeting of Kristina Lesnik, Vice Prime Minister of the Republic of Moldova for Reintegration, with Victor Kryzhanivskiy, Special Envoy of Ukraine on the Transnistrian Settlement*

Without a shadow of a doubt, the implementation of such projects attests to a substantial level of mutual understanding and commitment of our countries to closer cooperation. Hence, the dialogue is ongoing with our Ukrainian partners on expanding the joint control practice on other crossing points on the state border, with an updated agreement thereon ensuring the necessary legal framework.

By way of conclusion, I would like to reiterate that the Republic of Moldova attaches particular attention to international cooperation on regional security and we are pleased that our position is well received and supported by our partners, particularly Ukraine. It is my conviction that only by joining forces we can effectively counter major challenges and threats of modernity.