

# UK statement in response to Dr Claus Neukirch, head of the OSCE mission to Moldova

Thank you Mr Chair,

I'd like to thank Ambassador Neukirch for his report to the Permanent Council. The UK supports a peaceful, comprehensive and lasting settlement of the Transnistrian conflict on the basis of recognition of the territorial integrity and sovereignty of the Republic of Moldova, within its internationally recognized borders, and with a special status for Transnistria.

Ambassador Neukirch, thank you for the work of the OSCE Mission to Moldova and your effective leadership. We welcome your open and cooperative manner which has allowed you to build up relationships of trust with the respective Chief Negotiators, all partners in the 5+2 process and other relevant actors.

Your report makes clear the unique challenges which the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic has presented to the Mission since mid-March. We commend the way you have adapted to the new and evolving situation. Thank you for the creativity and energy you have shown while helping the parties address several issues which have arisen. In this context, we welcome the spirit of collaboration shown by Chisinau and Tiraspol over testing for cases of COVID-19 in the initial phase of the crisis.

Whilst noting this positive cooperation, we urge the parties to re-double their efforts to resolve several outstanding issues which have been generated by COVID-19. In particular, we refer to the challenges set out in your report around free movement of those resident in Transnistria who need to cross the de facto internal boundary line on a regular basis. This includes for work in the healthcare system and to access their bank accounts.

We believe that the Working Group on Health and the sub-Working Group on Banking could be convened to facilitate discussion of these issues.

Furthermore, we support the idea of a joint OSCE Mission-World Health Organisation visit to Transnistria to increase understanding of the impact of the pandemic in that region.

We regret the establishment of ad hoc check-points within the Security Zone following the outbreak of the viral pandemic. Although these have not prevented the Mission from undertaking its work, we must note that they represent a breach of the ceasefire agreement. It is regrettable that the Joint Control Commission (JCC) has not met in recent weeks and we hope that it will begin to do so again as a matter of priority.

Thank you also for the information you shared on developments related to the

Cobasna ammunition depot. We call on the Russian Federation to involve the OSCE in the process of removal and destruction of Russian ammunition from Transnistria. This will ensure transparency, in accordance with the 1999 Istanbul Summit Declaration and subsequent extension of the mandate of the Mission to Moldova. We also recall the importance of the withdrawal of the Operational Group of Russian Forces as part of the framework of commitments undertaken in the Summit Declaration.

Ambassador Neukirch, we welcome the cooperation you reported with other OSCE executive structures, including the High Commissioner on National Minorities, the Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights and the Representative on the Freedom of the Media. We also value the Mission's efforts to promote an inclusive, open and tolerant society and respect for human rights. We would be interested to hear more about the Mission's efforts to incorporate a gender perspective into its work, including its mediation efforts.

Ambassador Neukirch, we agree with you that the way in which the parties manage the current COVID-19 challenges could set the tone for a successful resumption of negotiations on the outstanding Berlin Plus Confidence Building Measures. In the interest of all citizens of the Republic of Moldova, the United Kingdom urges the parties to work together to resolve current differences in a collaborative manner.