



**PERMANENT DELEGATION
OF THE REPUBLIC OF MOLDOVA
TO THE OSCE**

STATEMENT

by Mr. Andrei Popov, Deputy Minister for Foreign Affairs and European Integration of the Republic of Moldova at the Annual Security Review Conference 2011, Vienna, 1 July 2011

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Dear colleagues,

Let me start by saying that over the years the Transnistrian conflict remains a source for both concern and hopes. As any unresolved conflict it causes enough concerns to its host-country – Republic of Moldova – as well as to its neighbors. But this conflict is also showing reasons for hope that it can be settled.

I'll continue with a brief screening of the current situation in the conflict settlement process.

During the last several years major political efforts were invested in bringing the negotiation process in the 5+2 format back on track. It was never a goal in itself – we believe that the negotiations are the main vehicle of the settlement process and an important decision-making mechanism. Over the last 2 years we managed to approach the political dialogue between Chisinau and Tiraspol to the stage where the official negotiations on the conflict resolution should restart. I believe that **all participants** in this process do understand the need to transfer the dialogue to the next level.

We made the first attempt in this direction on **the 21st of June in Moscow** – where a recent meeting in the 5+2 format took place. The central subject of this meeting, which was opened by the Foreign Minister of the Russian Federation Serghei Lavrov, was the issue of the resumption of the official negotiations. Six delegations, including the Moldovan one, made it clear that it is the right time to make this step. Regrettably, the Transnistrian representatives continued to put certain preconditions for resuming negotiations. The Moscow meeting was suspended and we are looking forward for its resumption in September, hoping that we will be able to achieve positive movement.

Such an approach demonstrates that **Tiraspol continues to pursue the policy aimed at obtaining maximum unilateral concessions** from Chisinau while delaying the settlement process. This strategy can not bring long-term results. The strategies like “*delayed status solution*” (meaning that talks on status should be delayed due to differences in positions, the

dialogue being focused on practical issues) are not sustainable and not helpful in resolving the problems faced by population. The Transnistrian region has no chance to be separated from Moldova. We believe the time has come for Tiraspol to demonstrate a more realistic approach and we ask our partners to make that clear in their contacts with the Transnistrian leadership.

Mr. Chairman,

Allow me to reflect further on the **main elements of the Moldovan approach** towards the settlement of the Transnistrian conflict. First of all, the final goal of the negotiation process is to find and agree on a comprehensive and viable political solution for the conflict that should be based on the respect of the sovereignty and territorial integrity of the Republic of Moldova. This approach is largely supported by international mediators and observers in the settlement process. Within these two basic parameters we are ready to discuss a special legal status for the Transnistrian region as an integral part of the Republic of Moldova. We believe the TN region should enjoy a large degree of autonomy in the main spheres of the public life and economy that would ensure a sustainable development for this region in sync with the rest of the country.

Mr. Chairman

Further on, I would like to address a number of relevant aspects related to the conflict settlement process.

Working groups on confidence building measures – they remain valid as a concept and as a mechanism of bringing Chisinau and Tiraspol closer and try to resolve existing issues in economic, social, environmental and law-enforcement areas. At this point in time, regrettably the CBMs are mainly stagnating (due to constant obstruction by Tiraspol). We believe that the perspective of resuming the official 5+2 talks should bring a positive impulse in the activity of the Working Groups and vice versa.

The political situation in the Transnistrian region has an increasing impact over the conflict settlement process. The upcoming so-called “presidential elections” in the Transnistrian region (to be held in December) brought tension into the political environment. The electoral process in Transnistria is far from being free and fair which reminds us about the need to reflect upon the democratization of the region.

One of the most sensitive spots in the conflict settlement process **is the Security Zone**. Although there were no serious security incidents over the last period of time, we have to acknowledge that the trends in this area are giving us enough reasons to stay alert. The activity of the Joint Control Commission – the decision-making body of the peacekeeping operation is totally blocked due to tough positions and unwillingness of Tiraspol to find compromise solutions. This stalemate constantly brings us back to the idea of the transformation of the current peacekeeping operation into a multinational civilian mission under a relevant international mandate that would be able to meet efficiently the current requirements on the ground. We believe we can find an optimal new format for this peacekeeping exercise with the participation of the main international actors involved in the conflict settlement process.

I would also like to reiterate our position on the need to finalize **the withdrawal of the Russian forces** from the territory of the Republic of Moldova, especially the remaining

ammunition stockpiles from Cobasna village. Let me remind that these munitions and the troops guarding them are stationed in Moldova contrary to Constitutional provisions and international commitments, as well as without the consent of the host-country. The issue of ammunition withdrawal is not directly linked with the settlement process, but we believe it can serve as a positive factor in promoting the conflict resolution.

In the concluding part of this presentation I would like to focus a bit on our hopes and plans for the future.

First of all, let me highlight the increased **role of the international partners**. Our goal is to foster a common approach and joint efforts on behalf of the mediators and observers from Russia, Ukraine, OSCE, EU and US. We are glad to acknowledge that there is a consensus among those five players regarding the need to advance the Transnistrian conflict settlement and, as a first step, to restart the negotiations in the 5+2 format. We also highly appreciate the role played by Germany in bringing a serious impetus to the conflict settlement process.

At the same time the **Moldovan authorities will undertake the necessary efforts** to provide a positive atmosphere in the conflict settlement. Right after the talks in Moscow we proposed to hold meetings of the Working Groups on CBMs which are dealing with key-issues raised by the Transnistrian side (railway, customs). We have also proposed to renew the direct dialogue on the level of the chief negotiators and remain open for contacts on the higher level, provided that Tiraspol will demonstrate a pragmatic and serious approach and refrain from making propaganda out of any action or word. Our dialogue with Tiraspol can not be based on unilateral concessions only. We invite the Transnistrian side to sit and discuss solutions which would be transparent, legal, mutually beneficial and non-discriminatory (Moldovan companies should not be in less privileged conditions than those from the left bank of the Nistru river).

Let me conclude by expressing our sincere gratitude to the Lithuanian Chairmanship and the OSCE Mission to Moldova, as well as to our partners from Moscow, Kiev, Bruxelles and Washington for their efforts in resolving the Transnistrian conflict.

Thank you.