

The OSCE Secretariat bears no responsibility for the content of this document and circulates it without altering its content. The distribution by OSCE Conference Services of this document is without prejudice to OSCE decisions, as set out in documents agreed by OSCE participating States.

PC.DEL/1591/23
23 November 2023

ENGLISH
Original: RUSSIAN

Delegation of the Russian Federation

**STATEMENT BY
MR. MAXIM BUYAKEVICH, DEPUTY PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF
THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION, AT THE 1452nd MEETING OF THE
OSCE PERMANENT COUNCIL**

23 November 2023

In response to the report by the Head of the OSCE Mission to the Republic of Moldova

Ambassador Keiderling,

We thank you for your presentation. We have carefully studied the written report circulated a few days ago as well. In that nine-page document it is mentioned five times, like a mantra, that the Permanent Conference on Political Issues in the Framework of the Negotiation Process for the Transdniestrian Settlement in the “5+2” format is “on hold”. The “5+2” negotiations have been on hold since October 2019, that is, this state of affairs has already entered its fifth year. And this despite the fact that the Foreign Ministers of the OSCE participating States have repeatedly confirmed by consensus that the format in question is “the only mechanism to achieve a comprehensive and sustainable settlement” and have called for the resumption of its work as soon as possible.

In February this year, in connection with his visit to the Republic of Moldova, the Chairperson-in-Office, Minister of Foreign Affairs of North Macedonia Bujar Osmani, reiterated the importance of the “5+2” talks. As a guarantor of and mediator in the settlement process, Russia has likewise repeatedly called for a return to the fully fledged operation of this mechanism, which has proved its effectiveness. In that regard, we have a specific question for you, Ms. Keiderling: could you tell us right now who exactly among the participants in the “5+2” talks is against that? And also why they are against it. All the parties, except for representatives of Transdniestria, are present here in this room. We would be curious to hear what it is that is shackling the process for settling the Transdniestrian conflict.

Against that backdrop, we note the Mission’s efforts to maintain contacts between the two banks of the Dniester in the “1+1” format. However, it must be said that there, too, the momentum is negative. Between November 2021 and November 2022 there were nine such meetings, while there have been just two over the past year. To us it is obvious that the reason for the chilling of contacts was the entry into force, in March of this year, of the law on amendments to the Criminal Code of the Republic of Moldova, which have made “separatism” a punishable offence. We note that the Mission has signalled its concern over that law and voiced the idea that assurances should be provided for the Transdniestrian negotiators. But has there been any sort of convincing response from the Moldovan side to these sensible proposals?

As reflected in the report, new Moldovan customs procedures entered into force in August. These affect the import-export operations of Transnistrian companies and essentially entail a doubling of customs fees. The Mission has called upon the authorities in Chişinău to consider the impact of that step on Transnistrian companies and the jobs that these provide. It would be interesting to know if there has been any response.

A few words now about the economic component. In a letter dated 3 November that, as mentioned in the report, was addressed by the chief negotiator for the authorities in Tiraspol, Vitaly Ignatiev, to the OSCE Chairperson-in-Office, Bujar Osmani, valid concerns are raised about a draft decision by the Government of the Republic of Moldova on amending the imposition of customs duties and fees on Transnistrian business entities so as to make them pay for any contamination of the environment. In the opinion of the Transnistrian side, such a move could lead to “unpredictable and fatal consequences of [an] economic, military-political and humanitarian nature”. The report says that, in response to the Mission’s expression of concern, Chişinău officials clarified that the draft decision referred only to pollution taxes. We have one further question, though it is more of a rhetorical one: are such clarifications sufficient to allay the misgivings of the authorities in Tiraspol?

Ambassador Keiderling,

In our view, the negotiation process is being hamstrung by artificially created complications in the tackling of what are purely humanitarian issues. For example, it took the authorities in Chişinău three and a half months to authorize the importation into Transnistria of an X-ray tube for a hospital. For more than a month now, the question of importing an X-ray machine for a Transnistrian hospital where patients with tuberculosis are treated has been unresolved. It is also regrettable that, despite calls from the Mission, the authorities in Chişinău are not prepared to begin issuing neutral number plates again for Transnistrian cars.

In these circumstances, a glimmer of hope is offered by the fact that a number of existing arrangements agreed on by the Sides remain in place, namely the smooth functioning of Latin-script schools; the mechanism for the apostilization of higher education diplomas issued by the Transnistrian State University; and the free-of-cost healthcare-related consultations for Transnistrian residents and the training courses for Transnistrian medical staff, organized in both cases with support from the Mission.

At the same time, bearing in mind all that has been said, we do not have the impression that the OSCE Mission to the Republic of Moldova, the Chairmanship and, indeed, our entire Organization as a whole are working effectively – above all with the authorities in Chişinău – towards the establishment of conditions for a sustainable settlement of the Transnistrian problem. Yet, it is precisely that which is the main task of this field operation. The situation continues to deteriorate. For our part, we once again express our readiness for close co-operation with a view to achieving positive results and wish the Mission team success in their work.

Thank you for your attention.