



PERMANENT DELEGATION
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TO THE OSCE

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STATEMENT

by Mr. Andrei Galbur, Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs
and European Integration of the Republic of Moldova
at the Annual Security Review Conference 2015,
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Working Session I: Early warning, conflict prevention, crisis management, conflict resolution and post-conflict rehabilitation: lessons learned and the way ahead

Madam Moderator,
Dear Colleagues,

I would also like to thank the distinguished keynote speakers for their insightful presentations. While aligning to the EU statement, I would like to make some remarks in my national capacity.

Let me state from the outset that neither the relevance of the conflict cycle in the current OSCE activity nor the importance of the OSCE in the conflict resolution area can be overestimated. We support the efforts aimed at strengthening the OSCE's capacities in all elements of the conflict cycle with special attention to *early warning and prevention* as well as *mediation*. In this context, we generally share one of the lessons reflected in the interim report by the Panel of eminent persons regarding the need to give priority to *early warning and prevention*. It is not a new idea but its relevance was confirmed again in Ukraine. Taking into account recent experiences, it seems to us that while undertaking early warning and preventive activities, the OSCE should also be able to detect hybrid threats. In terms of *mediation* – we support, where appropriate, a more ambitious role of the OSCE both in facilitating the dialogue on various levels between conflict sides and mediating the search for concrete solutions. A strong cooperation between the Chairmanship and the field presence is essential in this regard.

Madam Moderator,

Now let me turn to the Transnistrian conflict settlement process. Lately we are hearing a growing number of quite troubling questions. Will the situation in Transnistria escalate to a new armed conflict? What is the chance of creating a land corridor to Transnistria? What are the reasons behind increased military activities in the region? These are all relevant questions since geopolitics has returned to Europe and has broken so many rules of ensuring security and cooperation on our continent. I hope my remarks will help the audience get at least some answers.

First of all, I believe most of the participants would share the idea that since the

beginning of 2014 the Transnistrian conflict is not perceived anymore just as “*yet another frozen conflict*”. It is rather seen as an element of a complex and permanently developing regional context. In parallel, regional tensions themselves produced their impact on the Transnistrian conflict resolution. There are a lot of speculations and misleading propaganda in the media. Strong statements are delivered by officials from all parties concerned. Some military reassurance measures are taken on the ground and much tighter control is implemented along the borders.

But despite all these worrisome developments, the situation in and around the Transnistrian region remains calm. This is an important fact and I believe this shows that there is neither *will* nor *intention* from any of the two banks of Nistru River to engage in scenarios implying the use of force. At least I can say it with full confidence for the authorities in Chisinau – we are committed to exclusively peaceful means of conflict resolution. Nevertheless, if such scenarios would exist – it is clear they would not come from my capital. Our task in Chisinau is to keep the situation calm and stable, and prevent tensions.

Against this troubling background, the *Transnistrian settlement process* is also passing through a complicated period. The 5+2 negotiation process is currently on hold due to preconditions imposed by our counterparts in Tiraspol. Additionally, the Transnistrian side took decisions that could lead to the creation of new barriers to the free movement of people. We managed to diffuse the negative effect of these decisions only after difficult negotiations. In other potential areas such as *telecommunications and transportation* we feel that the other side has stiffened its approaches and positions.

The *economic issues* are increasingly influencing the whole Transnistrian settlement process. *On the one hand*, the economic situation in the entire area has been quite difficult as a result of global negative economic trends, embargos imposed by the Russian Federation and conflict in the Eastern Ukraine. *On the other hand*, the Transnistrian economy itself is quite vulnerable because of worn-out physical assets, high dependence on foreign subsidies and absence of sources of sustainable development. But in these difficult conditions, the leadership of the Transnistrian region is still guided more by political and ideological positions rather than by pragmatic economic interests. That is why Tiraspol in its political discourse is looking more for “external enemies and oppressors” than for new foreign trade opportunities.

International trade and economy is a highly mobile sphere and countries in the region are implementing serious reforms to be able to cope with the rhythm of development. But the Transnistrian region has been in continuous stagnation. Now it faces a serious crisis. Moldovan authorities are not interested in an economic crisis in Transnistria, because it would lead to unpredictable consequences and destabilization. But it is very difficult for us to prevent Tiraspol from causing a crisis by its own self-isolationist actions or, in some cases, non-actions.

Madam Moderator,

Now let me outline a number of key directions in three areas – *economic, military and political* – which we believe could be helpful in bringing the Transnistrian settlement back on track.

In the *economic* field a much more pragmatic and flexible approach on behalf of the Transnistrian leadership is needed. Tiraspol can reverse the negative trends by securing its preferential access to European markets. In this sense, a more open-minded attitude towards EU-Moldova Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Area would help Tiraspol avoid additional stress for its economy in the short term. Chisinau is prepared to display flexibility in the dialogue on this matter.

Second, international commitments and standards related to foreign trade activities offer little room for manoeuvre. The necessity to respect these rules while trading with external partners should not be seen by our counterparts in Tiraspol as an attempt to impose limitations. Moreover, the *content* of the international rules and commitments could serve as a basis for finding appropriate internal arrangements between Chisinau and Tiraspol in various fields – for example sanitary and phytosanitary control of goods. An efficient economic model can only be viable if based on the logic of bringing potentials together rather than keeping them apart.

In the *military and security* field – more transparency and predictability is needed. We have been voicing our strong concern over the increased military activities by Russian forces present without legal basis in the Transnistrian region of the Republic of Moldova. While we reiterate our call for the finalization of the withdrawal process of the Russian forces and munitions from the territory of Moldova, we also call for more restraint and transparency in conducting military exercises. In the same vein, Moldovan authorities continue to believe that the current peacekeeping mechanism fulfilled its main tasks and needs to be transformed into a more flexible and mobile multinational civilian operation corresponding to real needs on the ground.

Economic pragmatism and military restraint will create the right atmosphere in the process. This will help us move towards the core-task of the Transnistrian settlement - identifying a *comprehensive political solution for the conflict*. A special political status of the Transnistrian region within the Republic of Moldova should be agreed through negotiations in the 5+2 format and strengthened by legal guarantees. In order to be viable, the solution should be based on respect of sovereignty and territorial integrity of the Republic of Moldova. Lack of such a status will continue to cause political uncertainty, hinder economic development and limit the abilities of the Transnistrian region to deal effectively with external challenges.

We understand that starting a result-oriented discussion on political issues needs a well-prepared ground. At the same time, most of the major economic, social, humanitarian issues can be finally resolved only in the framework of a political settlement. That is why rigid conditionalities promoted by Tiraspol are not helpful in achieving even intermediary solutions. Therefore, we consider that discussions on all issues should be able to advance in parallel. And another recipe for success is that the dialogue should continue despite all challenges. In this regard we call for unconditional continuation of the negotiations in the 5+2 format. I hope international partners involved in the process will unite their efforts towards this goal. We rely on the strong and able leadership of the OSCE in this respect.

Thank you