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PC.DEL/363/20  
30 April 2020

ENGLISH  
Original: RUSSIAN

Delegation of the Russian Federation

**STATEMENT BY MR. ALEXANDER LUKASHEVICH,  
PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION,  
AT THE 1265th MEETING OF THE OSCE PERMANENT COUNCIL  
VIA VIDEO TELECONFERENCE**

30 April 2020

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

Mr. Chairperson,

We thank Ambassador Claus Neukirch for his comprehensive report. The joint informal briefing yesterday by Ambassador Neukirch and the Special Representative of the OSCE Chairperson-in-Office for the Transdniestrian Settlement Process, Ambassador Thomas Mayr-Harting, was also useful.

The unilateral measures taken by the authorities in Chişinău and Tiraspol to curb the epidemiological threat posed by the spread of the coronavirus are leading to a deterioration of the situation with regard to the Transdniestrian settlement. The residents of Transdniestria have faced additional difficulties as a result. Following a decision by the Ukrainian Government, international traffic along the Transdniestrian section of the border between Ukraine and Moldova has been blocked. Among other things, this affects essential medical supplies and protective equipment. Bank cards from international payment systems have been disabled in the region. We are grateful to the OSCE Mission for its assistance in finding temporary solutions to alleviate the humanitarian problems.

Unfortunately, the current epidemiological crisis has contributed to intensifying mutual distrust on both sides of the Dniester. It is regrettable that in these circumstances some representatives of the parties are deliberately attempting to aggravate these damaging tendencies.

We have repeatedly drawn attention to the fact that the potential of existing negotiation formats is not being used sufficiently. We have warned of the danger of attempts to make the holding of meetings of the Permanent Conference on Political Issues in the Framework of the Negotiation Process for the Transdniestrian Settlement in the “5+2” format contingent on prior agreements by the parties. The recent development of the situation shows the flaws in this approach.

In the interests of resolving the disagreements that have accumulated between the parties on either side of the Dniester, we believe it necessary to strictly adhere to the agreed aim of intensifying the negotiation process at all levels, particularly in the “5+2” format. In the current circumstances, we are willing to continue informal consultations by the “5+2” participants via videoconference. The final decision lies with the parties themselves.

In principle, we agree with the idea of seeking solutions together to the pressing humanitarian problems of the population connected with the COVID-19 epidemic. At the same time, the already agreed social and humanitarian measures from the “Berlin Plus package” and the additional reciprocal measures outlined by the parties at the end of last year and the beginning of this year should be fully implemented. We are sure that the results of this work will not have an adverse effect on the restoration of trust between the authorities in Chişinău and Tiraspol. It is of fundamental importance to carry out the task set in 2016 of improving the mechanism for incorporating the agreements reached in the “5+2” format into the national legislation. As we have said before, this will protect the agreements between the parties from being influenced by external factors.

We regret the attempts to artificially inflate the issue of withdrawing Russian ammunition from the depots in Cobasna (Kolbasna). Political games of this kind do not help to speed up the process. I recall that the 2002 OSCE Ministerial Council in Porto identified the need to provide the necessary conditions for the resumption of withdrawal/disposal. So far these conditions have not been present, and the climate of negotiations between the authorities in Chişinău and Tiraspol is not conducive to their establishment. In spite of this, Russia is not giving up on this task and indeed has also agreed to return to the topic. We have stated our willingness to dispose of some of the ammunition whose storage date has expired within the framework of current Russian Ministry of Defence programmes. No external funding or international monitoring is required for this. It is a matter of bilateral relations between Russia and Moldova.

We should also like to warn of the danger of intrigues with respect to the movement of transport vehicles of the Operational Group of Russian Forces in Transdniestria mentioned in the written report by the Head of the OSCE Mission. The Russian representative to the Joint Control Commission has provided detailed explanations in that regard. It is well known that the Operational Group is part of the single peacekeeping mechanism deployed in the region in accordance with the 1992 Agreement on the Principles for a Peaceful Settlement of the Armed Conflict in the Dniester Region of the Republic of Moldova, which forms the basis for the settlement of the Transdniestrian problem. The Group takes part in the rotation of Russian peacekeepers. It is important to be aware that deliberate or unwitting attempts to undermine the effectiveness of the operation are likely to have unpredictable consequences. The peacekeepers have not only reliably guaranteed peace in the region for many years but have also helped to create the conditions necessary for continuing the peace process.

In conclusion, we should like to reaffirm the following. As a mediator and guarantor State for the settlement of the Transdniestrian problem, Russia is ready to assist the authorities in Chişinău and Tiraspol in their search for compromises, in close co-ordination with the Chairmanship and other participants in the “5+2” process. The effectiveness of these efforts depends, first and foremost, on the parties themselves, their readiness for constructive dialogue and their consideration of each other’s interests. We call on the parties to abandon attempts to exert pressure on each other, making the situation worse for the local population in the current and already difficult epidemiological conditions.

We wish Ambassador Neukirch and the OSCE Mission team success in their future work.

Thank you for your attention.