

STATEMENT
DELIVERED BY MR. VLADIMIR VORONIN,
PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF MOLDOVA,
AT THE SPECIAL SESSION OF THE PARLIAMENT
OF THE REPUBLIC OF MOLDOVA

/10 June 2005/

Dear Deputies, dear Members of Government,

Today's session is dedicated to one problem only – the problem of Transnistrian settlement. From the outset, I would like to say that even though this issue is most topical for our statehood, it is the first time we meet in this format in order to examine it. Today we have one of the most serious reasons to proceed to a thorough debate - the Ukrainian initiative, presented by its new leadership, and first of all, by President Viktor Yuschenko.

First of all, allow me to make a few remarks. I am aware of the fact that all of our parliamentary factions are critical when it comes to formulating a position on a proposal or a project for the settlement of the Transnistrian problem, which are occasionally drafted either in Moldova or abroad. Each of us considers himself/ herself an overqualified expert in this area. In reality, though, we became snobs in a sense, most of the times ignoring important and sincere proposals, that might have been accepted and developed.

Our criticism is sometimes more of a caprice. If you read everything written in our newspapers on this issue, occasionally you get the impression that the political class from Moldova doesn't need any settlement and accepts the idea of living in a divided country, is comfortable having unprotected borders, black economy in Transnistria and foreign military presence. I very much hope this is a false impression. I would like to believe that the day of the future reunification with Transnistria will become the happiest day in the life of all those present here. I really want to believe that for all of you here here, with no exception, the idea that all the residents of Transnistria will finally become full fledged Moldovan citizens is a sacred ideal.

In my capacity as President of Moldova, I pay special importance to the sincerity and the amazing feeling of responsibility with which the President of Ukraine, Viktor Yushchenko, launched his proposals concerning the Transnistrian settlement. And it is our duty to have a most careful and grateful approach to the initiative of the Ukrainian Government. I will say this very sincerely: Ukraine's decision to undertake this breakthrough in the settlement process is undoubtedly an act of personal courage by President Yuschenko. We all see the amount of internal problems faced by the President of Ukraine, the many hidden dangers and much conservatism that provide for the consequent policy of Ukrainian renewal promoted by the President and the Prime Minister of this country. In spite of this, the democratic leadership of Ukraine considered it as its duty to support Moldova. We must not only appreciate and welcome this development, but also consolidate the trust between our countries and peoples, without making any stops, only by moving forward!

As far as the Plan for the settlement of the Transnistrian problem presented by Ukraine is concerned, we can say that it is by far the most interesting document containing the best perspectives we have ever had on the negotiation table.

Why is the Ukrainian Plan unique?

First of all, this is a very delicate plan, I would even call it intelligent, and it avoids those specific issues that always block the settlement process. I refer to the withdrawal of foreign troops from Moldova, to the delimitation of competences between the central authorities and Transnistria, to the ways of ensuring stability in the security zone, to the establishment of a legal control over the Transnistrian segment of the Moldovan – Ukrainian border, etc. But the lack of any provisions in this regard does not exclude their importance; on the contrary, it offers a wide framework for these issues to be discussed and resolved additionally, under all their aspects, within the many multilateral arrangements Moldova is part of.

Secondly, the Ukrainian Plan strongly provides for the territorial and political integrity of the future Moldova, and the elements of the political status of Transnistria shows that Ukraine is interested in seeing Moldova as a viable, efficient and democratic state.

Thirdly, Ukraine focuses on the most important mechanism of settlement, submitted to Moldova for the first time as a means of territorial reintegration – the democratization of Transnistria. If the whole Ukrainian plan would have included only this provision, we still should have wholeheartedly accepted Viktor Yushchenko's initiative. That is due to the fact that the essence of the Transnistrian problem is the impossibility of the region's population to exercise their citizens rights, to act as an active force in the settlement process. It is important that the plan stipulates some elements of high importance, the main ones in the process of democratization of Transnistria. The algorithm is very simple. Firstly, the Parliament of our country adopts a law concerning the basic principles of the Transnistrian status. This document will represent a consolidated, common position of the Moldovan political class concerning the place Transnistria has to have within Moldova as well as the legal procedures of the elections to the representative body of power from Transnistria. Afterwards, an international electoral commission, acting under an OSCE mandate and the law concerning the basic principles of the Transnistrian status, will organize and conduct elections to the Supreme Soviet of Transnistria. If the elections will be democratic, the final element of the settlement will be to involve the democratically elected deputies of the Supreme Soviet to clarify and finalize the Law concerning the Transnistrian status, which shall be adopted in its final version by the Parliament of the whole country as well as by the regional representative body of Transnistria.

Dear Deputies,

I am confident in the future of this approach to the problem. It's the optimal formula for the peaceful, democratic, and final settlement, which will provide for the reintegration of the country in the shortest period of time. In this regard, I would like to ask you to support the draft of the Parliament Declaration of the Republic of Moldova concerning the Ukrainian initiative on the Transnistrian settlement, submitted by me for a parliamentary debate.

We certainly should not ignore such important aspects of the settlement as the legal control on the Transnistrian segment of the Moldovan – Ukrainian border, concrete and clear

understanding of the principles and conditions for democratisation of the Transnistrian region and establishment of the conditions for demilitarisation of the Transnistrian region.

In this context, dear deputies, I consider it important to inform you that we have achieved significant progress on the issue of ensuring a legal control on the Transnistrian segment of the border. During my visit to Brussels and Strasbourg, I delivered a letter, signed by me and Ukrainian President Viktor Yushchenko, to Javier Solana, Secretary General of the Council of the EU and Jose Manuel Barroso, President of the European Commission, asking the European Union to contribute to the establishment of an international control over the Transnistrian segment of the Moldovan - Ukrainian border. It's extremely important that our initiative was received with optimism. Moreover, we are looking forward to upcoming trilateral meetings, where experts and high officials from EU, Ukraine and Moldova will convene on the details and mechanisms for establishing a permanent and efficient customs control at the border.

Both Moldova and Ukraine need the assistance of the European institutions and a qualified interpretation of the conditions for Transnistrian democratisation. According to the Plan, the European institutions, especially OSCE and Council of Europe, should undertake the greater share of activities while organising the elections in Transnistria. I consider it important to request assistance on behalf of these European institutions in defining the conditions and criteria for Transnistrian democratisation.

Some of the criteria are obvious for all of you: the mandatory liquidation of the so-called Transnistrian ministry of state security, ensure free access of political parties from Moldova to the election process in Transnistria, release all political detainees, etc. I believe that we should vote for such an appeal even today. Taking into consideration that, according to the Ukrainian plan, the settlement process shall take no more than 18 months, we should not be the ones to impede it.

The demilitarization process in the Transnistrian region should become a subject of another appeal of our Parliament addressed to the OSCE, the EU, Council of Europe, the US, Ukrainian, Russian and Romanian Governments. Only such a multilateral format can ensure the fulfilment of the proposed tasks. I already outlined the general guidelines for the demilitarization of the region in the North-Atlantic Council and during my meeting with NATO Secretary General Jaap de Hoop Scheffer in Bruxelles. It is regretful that my statement was distorted by some foreign media. The essence of the approach suggested by us is quite simple.

First of all, the Republic of Moldova is a democratic, neutral and modern state which doesn't need any military guarantees or any military presence. We consider that completion of the withdrawal of Russian troops will constitute an important contribution of the Russian Federation to the settlement of the Transnistrian problem, a contribution which will be highly appreciated by the people of our country. We do not see any political or geo-strategic grounds for the further deployment of the Russian troops on Moldovan soil. I am certain that the present Russian government sees none as well. The good will of the Moldovan state which openly declared itself a multi-ethnic one, the caring attitude for Russian culture and language, represent the most convincing proof of the absence of any objective divergences with the Russian Federation. I am sure that we will come to an agreement in this sense and remove the language of mutual pretensions and petty offences, a language not common for our countries and peoples, from our relationship with Russia.

Secondly, we consider that the armed personnel, present in the security zone of the Republic

of Moldova, should be replaced by observers acting under an international mandate. I am convinced that we should not militarise the Transnistrian problem. We should recognize that the military personnel can not mediate a real re-integration or any confidence building measures in the region. I consider it necessary to obtain active support of the OSCE for our position. I count on the understanding within this important organization of the way in which we address this issue.

Thirdly, the demilitarization of Transnistria implies enormous financial expenses for the transport of the military equipment and ammunitions, and especially expenses for the social assistance and re-qualification of those who are enrolled in the so-called military structures of Transnistria. The participation of the Republic of Moldova in NATO's "Partnership for Peace" Programme, where Russia and Ukraine are also active, could represent a very efficient framework for the fulfilment of these tasks due to its financial and administrative format.

If such an approach will be accepted, I suggest that we express today this position in an appeal, thus accelerating the solution of one of the most important dilemmas of the Transnistrian problem.

Dear Deputies,

Today, from this tribune, I wish to reiterate my gratitude to the President of Ukraine, Mr. Viktor Yushchenko, for such an important political proposal. I believe that the Ukrainian initiative is the beginning of a fruitful and promising stage in our bilateral relations, and the beginning of an era of honesty and strategic partnership between our countries, in the name of European integration, triumph of democracy and common welfare of our peoples.