



United States Mission to the OSCE

Statement on Schools and Acts of Aggression in Transnistria, Moldova

As delivered by Political Counselor Bruce Connuck
to the Permanent Council, Vienna
September 9, 2004

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

The situation in Transnistria continues to worsen. The Transnistrian authorities appear intent on prolonging the crisis they instigated with their forcible closure and harassment of Moldovan-language schools.

In addition to shutting down these schools, the Transnistrians are disrupting rail transport and supply of electricity. They are blocking and destroying roads to prevent Moldovan farmers from bringing their crops to market. They have cut off water and electricity to the Moldovan-language orphanage in Bendery.

The latest reprehensible action was the September 6 forcible takeover by Transnistrian militia of the railroad terminal in Bendery. Militia members reportedly detained a Moldovan television journalist in the process.

The Moldovan government has sought peaceful means to bring the Transnistrian authorities to reason by imposing economic measures against them and appealing to the international community. Transnistrian authorities have only responded with further provocations.

We again condemn the unconscionable actions of the Transnistrian authorities and demand that they reopen the schools immediately, withdraw from the railroad terminal, and stabilize the situation in the security zone.

We call upon both sides to exercise restraint and to remain actively engaged in the process of finding a peaceful solution to this crisis and to the overall conflict through negotiations.

The United States applauds the tireless efforts of the OSCE Mission in Moldova to mediate the crisis. We also recognize the efforts being made by the Russian Federation and Ukraine to exert influence on the Transnistrian regime.

We call on the Russian Federation to redouble its efforts, in close coordination with the other mediators, to induce the Transnistrian authorities to cease their provocations and return to the five-sided talks in a cooperative manner. We urge Ukraine to follow through on its commitment, made last week, to cooperate with the Moldovan government's legitimate efforts to bring economic pressure to bear on the Transnistrian leadership; we also urge Ukraine to observe the 2003 Moldova-Ukraine customs agreement by only importing Moldovan goods that have legitimate customs seals.

We further call on Ukraine, Moldova and other interested parties to support the establishment of an international monitoring operation of the Ukraine-Moldova border, including the Transnistrian segment of that border. Effective monitoring is essential to enforcing the security of that border.

Finally, we also urge other members of the international community to take appropriate measures against the Transnistrian leadership.

In this regard, and in concert with the European Union, the United States has expanded our visa ban to include Transnistrian officials directly responsible for the crisis with respect to Moldovan-language schools, and we are prepared to examine additional measures. We hope this step will send a clear signal that the irresponsible and reckless actions of the Transnistrian leadership will not be tolerated by the international community.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.