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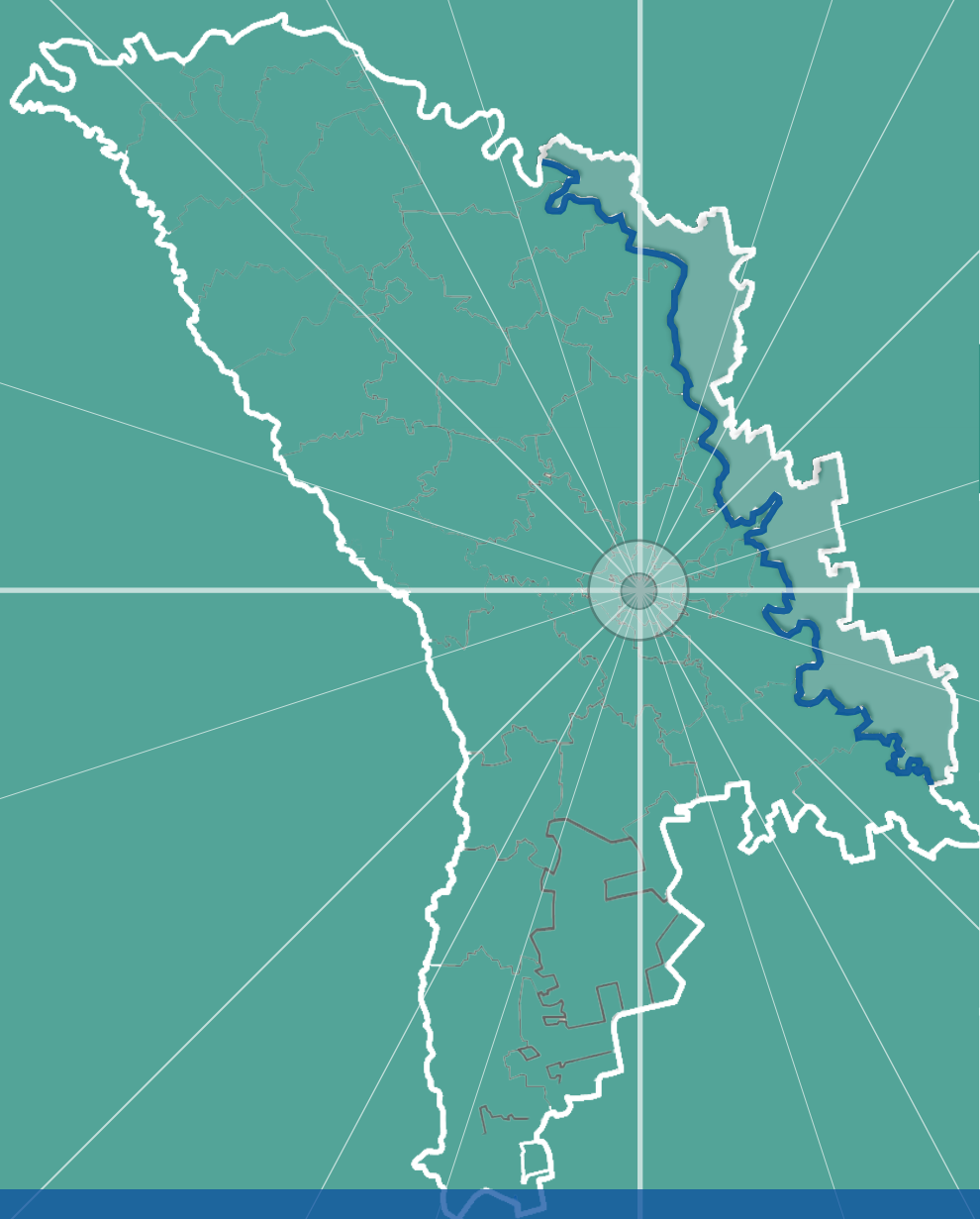


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■ editorial

Socialization of the Transnistrian conflict or the time of civil society



Soon it is two years since the beginning of formal negotiations on the Transnistrian conflict settlement, but the results of such a broad framework for discussions are still being expected. Negotiations meant the official resumption of the activities of the "Permanent conference on political issues within the framework of negotiations process on the Transnistrian settlement" in the "5+2" format, regular meetings between the Prime Minister of the Republic of Moldova and the Tiraspol leader, meetings, mediated by the OSCE, of the chief negotiators from both sides, Eugen Carpov and Nina Shtansky, the relaunch of Working Groups activities on confidence-building measures between both banks of the Dniester. After the euphoria of the first agreements, related to the movement of trains or abolition of "customs duties", the Transnistrian conflict settlement took a different turn from the expectations towards the negotiations that restarted in the autumn of 2011. Moreover, after two years of negotiations, the situation in the Security Zone became tense, while Tiraspol authorities unilaterally sign documents outlining the political frontier (on the Transnistrian segment) of two independent states (with the borders) recognized by the entire international community – the Republic of Moldova and Ukraine. The media space is teeming with mutual accusations, the Working Groups are no longer functional and many people launch all sorts of apocalyptic scenarios.

It is certain that the recent events betray the unsustainability of the negotiating framework on the Transnistrian conflict settlement, while civil society is virtually removed from the „reintegration books.“ It can not be a coincidence the lack of results in the negotiations and the absence of civil society in the conflict resolution equation, as a society can not be passive in the XXI century

and let politicians prepare behind closed doors, all kinds of scenarios for the future. Beyond political calculations and the strategies that politicians have or not, civil society is entitled to identify its own areas of cooperation and / or to come up with policy recommendations for the authorities on both banks of the Dniester. The presence of civil society is needed not necessarily in order for it to be initiated in the ins and outs of „high politics“ or to put extra pressure on negotiations but rather to be consulted on matters of public interest. The institutionalization of a robust civil society is the pre-condition for development in this century, regardless of the future legal status of the Transnistrian region, while articulating serious discussion platforms of civil society on both banks of the Dniester, could bring added value to the negotiation process. Discussions and research projects, from passenger transport to health services on both banks of the Dniester, involving young intellectuals and various joint campaigns - protection of human rights, the fight against cancer and protection of the natural habitat of the river Dniester - all will bring to the public agenda feelings and needs of ordinary people, which the associate sector organizations represent. Once politicians brought the negotiations to a deadlock, creating around them great mystery, it is the right time for society to be heard, it is time for civil society.

This is namely the purpose of the project „*Strengthening Civil Society Involvement in the Transnistria Conflict Settlement Process*“, which begins with this first issue of the „Dniestrian Realities“, to monitor the negotiations and „related events“ to stimulate debate on current issues for citizens on both banks of the Dniester and make them known to the authorities. ■

■ interviews

Formal negotiations and civil society projects



Corneliu **CIUREA**,
IDIS „Viitorul”
program coordinator,
Chişinău

— How do you see the negotiations between Chisinau and Tiraspol from the civil society standpoint?

— The negotiations reached a deadlock and this is due to an excessive politicization of the negotiation process taking place only in a narrow circle of people. We have long been talking about activation of levels two and three - civil society, opinion leaders, and youth and business people - but, surprisingly, the contacts are very rare. The responsibility certainly lies with the central authorities that refuse to invest in what, in the medium and long term, might bring them political benefits. In addition, financing from abroad is also unclear.

— How do you see the role of civil society in the Transnistrian conflict settlement?

— Civil society could be more active at all levels. For some time it has been promoted the idea of including civil society experts in „5 +2” negotiations. It’s an idea that pleases both Moldovan negotiators and certain countries participating in this format. Also, it may be the case of an international conference held in Kiev, for instance, with the participation of civil society negotiators and experts to see where things do not go smoothly. The involvement of experts is also required in case of thematic working



Dmitry **GAVRILOV**,
Director Information
Resource Center “COMMON
HOME”, Tiraspol

— How do you see negotiations between Chisinau and Tiraspol from the standpoint of civil society?

— From my point of view, based on practical experience of peacekeeping on both banks of the river, there are increasingly more and more barriers between Chisinau and Tiraspol. The negotiations between the two banks take place in a very specific way where the role of civil society is purely declarative. Negotiators support gladly the need for a deeper involvement of civil society representatives from both banks in these processes but, in fact, such initiatives are viewed with no enthusiasm by the parties concerned on both banks. Among civil society leaders from both banks, who tend towards concrete results prevails the opinion that in this kind of projects are interested the organizations themselves and not the ruling elites for fear that the other party does not take the initiative. It is no secret that civil society has more real opportunities for cooperation and dialogue. With regret, I must mention that civil society from both banks much more rarely finds common points and is less and less interested in implementing joint projects. This trend is due to the lack of real interest and a mechanism for the inclusion of civil society in the negotiations between the both banks of the Dniester.

Civil society still considers the OSCE Mission to Moldova as being the highest authority in matters of

groups, whose activity, unfortunately, ended in stalemate. About levels two and three I spoke above. Contacts between people are extremely rare and this affects the negotiation process because there is not a positive trend yet to spur politicians to find common solutions.

– Describe briefly the achievements of the project „Building trust between both banks of the Dniester - preparing public policy experts.“

– The project aims to create lasting ties between young people on the two banks. Conceived as a platform for training experts in public policy, this project aims at the establishment of groups of people who would speak to each other a language of understanding and cooperation. We have held several meetings on various topics - ranging from regional and rural development to the post-Soviet man and we notice the lively interest that young people show for discussions in such a format. I must admit that this period of disruption that we experienced created as well certain cultural lines separating the young - a fact which is seen, for example, in the use of the Russian language. But all these problems may be overcome where there is interest and willingness. The project aims to organize a number of round tables this year and we expect active young people to take part in these events. ■

peacekeeping projects. This organization has earned the trust and respect due to its impartiality, openness and accessibility for civil society from both banks.

– How do you see the role of civil society in the Transnistrian conflict settlement?

– I believe that in terms of civil society the concept „Transnistrian conflict“ is less applicable. From the medical point of view, nowadays, the situation has been serious but stable, already for 22 years. On the right bank there are several NGOs working on the Transnistrian issue. But this is not their main activity and most of them are supporters of the radical methods of solving the problem. In Transnistria, I know only one organization openly declaring interest in developing good relations with colleagues from Moldova and cooperating with them successfully. The partnership between Moldovan and Transnistrian organizations in 95% of cases is forced and is caused by the competition of funding applications and not by the desire to solve concrete problems of citizens. I believe that civil society should try to develop a mechanism of interaction with negotiators in the 5 +2 negotiating process and strengthen its positions there. For us, it is equally important not to lose touch with each other, coordinate our activities consistently, share positive experiences and realize joint projects in particular in order to enhance the potential of young people. It is extremely important to encourage the development, both in Moldova and Transnistria, of young experts' potential who are willing to contribute to finding a solution to the complex problem of normalization of relations between the two brotherly sides of the river.

– Describe briefly the achievements of the project „Building trust between both banks of the Dniester - preparing public policy experts.“

– This project is the only initiative implemented regularly for the second year in the Republic of Moldova, Transnistria and Ukraine.

There are multiple achievements within the Project, but the most important is the increase of confidence between the youngsters from both sides of the river Dniester and the circle of experts in public policies field was extended. ■

■ chronicle

June 2013

● **June was marked by a series of events that preceded and succeeded the 8th round of 5 +2 negotiations, in Odessa.**

— The Transnistrian administration increased the number of troops in Bender / Tighina, a district with an increased security regime and creates unbearable conditions for the two penitentiaries subordinated to the Ministry of Justice of the Republic of Moldova, Penitentiary No.8 and Penitentiary No. 12.

— The Tiraspol leader, Yevgeny Shevchuk, decides to move, from Tiraspol to Tighina, the region legislative body - the Supreme Soviet.

— May 23-24, negotiations in Odessa become very tense because of Tiraspol authorities actions and do not lead to any result.

● **28 May - at the OSCE Mission in Chisinau there was a meeting of representatives of Chisinau and Tiraspol: Eugen Carpov and Nina Shtansky.**

● *Key topics of the meeting:*

— The situation in the Security Zone, including movement and redeployment of military contingents and interaction of bodies responsible for maintaining public order.

— Interaction between institutions of combating crime operating in Bender, and other factors that generate tensions in the Security Zone.

● **June 10 - back from Moscow, where he had a meeting with Dmitry Rogozin, Yevgeny Shevchuk signed the Law on the „state border of the Transnistrian Moldovan Republic“.**

— The document sets out policy provisions related to the region border and boundaries of the

territory under the sovereignty of the Transnistrian Moldovan Republic, including settlements under the jurisdiction of Chisinau.

— However, the „state border can not be changed unilaterally by neighboring countries“ and border protection is carried out by the competent bodies of the region.

● **June 11 - the Government of the RM statement regarding the Law on the „State Border of the Transnistrian Moldovan Republic“.**

— Constitutional authorities deplore the unilateral actions of Tiraspol and urge the international partners involved in the 5 +2 negotiation process to make use of the powers they are offered by their status and express their official position on the decision of structures from Tiraspol.

● **June 12 - Yevgeny Shevchuk approved the „Regulation on crossing points of the state border of the Transnistrian Moldovan Republic“.**

— In the document as international border crossing points are listed seven points.

— The regulation provides for five „inter-state“ border crossing points at the frontier with the Republic of Moldova.

● **June 12 - the OSCE President, Leonid Kojara, expresses his concern about Tiraspol decision on the „state border“.**

— The Ukrainian official stressed the importance of strengthening efforts of participants in the Transnistrian conflict settlement process in order to avoid its further escalation.

• **June 18 - the United States denounces any unilateral action of the parties involved in the Transnistrian conflict.**

— „We denounce any unilateral action by any party involved in the Transnistrian conflict and continue to call for a non-violent settlement of the conflict with a special status for Transnistria within the sovereign borders of the Republic of Moldova „

• **June 21 - Statement by EU High Representative, Catherine Ashton on the so-called legal act on Transnistria border:**

— I urge the two sides involved in the Transnistrian conflict to cooperate in a constructive spirit within the 5 +2 negotiating process, towards a peaceful settlement of the conflict.

• **June 21 - The Parliament of the Republic of Moldova adopted a statement on the situation in Transnistria.**

— The document stipulates that unilateral actions of any kind including those that legislate any border establishment within the territory of the sovereign state of the Republic of Moldova, trigger the undermining of the settlement process, escalate tensions and defy the existing regulatory mechanisms.

• **In June there was held a single meeting of the Working Groups to promote confidence- and security building measures in the context of the Transnistrian conflict settlement.**

— On 28 June was held the meeting of the Working Group on Education.

• **The Joint Control Commission met only in regular sessions in June (every Thursday of the week) but failed to adopt the Minutes at any session, because of the Transnistrian military contingent introduced (without the JCC agreement) in Tighina.**

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