

**Javier Solana: Chisinau and Tiraspol must assume their full responsibility and act in spirit of good faith and compromise**

**Interview with Javier Solana, EU High Representative for CFSP  
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The European Union and the Republic of Moldova will share a common border, perhaps already in 2007, and the bloc is interested in peace and stability at its eastern boundary line. The OSCE Dutch chairmanship has proposed the deployment of E.U. troops for a peace consolidation operation in Moldova, specifically in its breakaway enclave of Transnistria, and this initiative has been recently discussed in the E.U. Political and Security Committee in Brussels." What are the results of discussions in this topic?

**Javier Solana:** Present internal discussions in the E.U. regarding possible options to support progress in the current situation in Moldova are part of the European Union's overall determination to build a stronger cooperation with Moldova and to play a meaningful and appropriate role in the process of reaching a resolution to the situation in Transnistria. Our priorities on the latter issue are clear: the primary focus must be on the political negotiations, without which discussions on different options for peace consolidation risk becoming purely academic. To reach such an agreement will require that both parties to the conflict assume their full responsibility and act in a spirit of good faith and compromise. We have seen some encouraging signs in this respect in past months, but renewed efforts are now needed.

What the E.U. is undertaking with regard to the eventual peace consolidation force under the aegis of the OSCE is at this preliminary stage to study the different options available. The EU has already declared its full readiness to assist in implementing any peace agreement, which includes considerations also in the field of possible military and civilian contributions.

What is the stance of the European Union member states regarding this initiative? Is there any consensus between member states about sending troops to Transnistria?

**Javier Solana:** There is a broad consensus in the EU to engage more strongly with Moldova. Moldova is our neighbor and we want to strengthen our relations to explore the full potential of our cooperation.

We have already taken a number of steps in this direction, including through a more focussed diplomatic effort and our direct participation as observer in the Joint Constitutional Commission. On the strategic level the development of the E.U.'s Wider Europe policy, which was launched by me and Foreign Affairs Commissioner Chris Patten last year, is another expression of our determination to build stronger relations with Moldova.

Regarding the possibility of the E.U. contributing troops to a peace consolidation force as I have already pointed out, yet to await a clearer common understanding within the OSCE as to the exact modalities of such a force, including the definition of a mandate, duration and participation. The E.U. is taking part in these discussions.

A German press report ("Frankfurter Allgemeine Sonntagszeitung") claims that the United States would like to deploy NATO troops to lead the operation rather than to assign a European command of the mission. Is this true? What is best, in your opinion, for Moldova? Could the Balkan scenario (NATO troops replaced by European forces) be applicable for Moldova, too?

**Javier Solana:** I am not aware of any such proposal and generally I do not see the risk of the E.U. and NATO getting engaged in any sort of competition on this issue. You ask me what is best for Moldova? Clearly what is best for Moldova is to resolve its domestic conflict once and for all and to start developing its full potential as a European country. And the international community, including the EU, is ready to assist Moldova on this path. What will be the best solution for a peace consolidation force, which is only one of the elements that may have to be put in place to support a peace agreement, is still an open question and it is too early to speculate around different scenarios at this point.

The Russian Federation shows signs of dissatisfaction about the initiative of the Netherlands, though it does not officially oppose an E.U. lead in the Transnistrian peacekeeping mission. Is there any possibility that Russia remains in command with the peacekeeping in Transnistria in the case that an E.U. peace consolidation contingent arrives in Moldova - not to forget that Russia has to withdraw its military presence from Moldova by the end of this year? If Russia breaches its commitments regarding Transnistria, what happens to the E.U.-Russia relations?

**Javier Solana:** The E.U. wants to cooperate positively with Russia in Moldova on a broad range of issues and I am convinced that we will move increasingly in this direction in the coming months and years. We will continue to insist on a complete troop and ammunition withdrawal in compliance with the Istanbul and Porto commitments. It is now urgent that this process is resumed immediately. If

cooperation between the E.U. and Russia would be deemed the most appropriate option for any future peace consolidation force I am convinced that we will be able to work out the necessary modalities, building on past and present cooperation in this field.

The OSCE proposed last year federalism as a solution for Moldova. This project, which sees an asymmetrical federalisation, is being increasingly criticized by independent analysts, who fear that federalization would transform Moldova into a Russian protectorate. As Transnistria claims equal footing with Moldova and opposes a strong central government in Chisinau, civil society and the opposition demands the enforcement of three Ds: Democratisation, Decriminalisation and Demilitarisation of Transnistria under European supervision. And what, in your opinion, is the optimal solution in this issue?

**Javier Solana:** I am aware that the word "federalism" has become a debated term, where interpretations and opinions differ. But one has to be aware that there is no universal model for creating a federal state. You can find examples of federations in which the subjects have extensive rights and those in which their rights are very limited. And you will find non-federal states in which some or all regions have quite far-reaching rights. In the end the main issue will be how to divide the competencies between the subjects and the central authorities.

I strongly believe that democratisation, de-criminalisation and de-militarisation are all issues of high priority and essential parts of normalizing the domestic situation in Moldova. We must not, however, risk making the mistake of taking the problems that exist in these areas as an excuse not to reach a settlement of the conflict. These are all elements that we need to deal with and we should, to my mind, deal with them in a pragmatic and comprehensive way.

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