



Strasbourg, 15 July 2003

Restricted
CDL-UD (2003) 2
Eng. only

**UniDem Seminar on “State consolidation and national identity”,
Chisinau, 4 – 5 July 2003.**

Synopsis

The Venice Commission in co-operation with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Moldova and the Department of Inter-ethnic relations organised a seminar on “State consolidation and national identity” in Chisinau on 4 – 5 July 2003. This activity is part of the programme of the Moldovan Presidency of the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe. The working sessions were held in the Republic Palace.

The main aim of this activity was to explore different models of multi-ethnic State and the practice of other countries co-operating in the framework of the Council of Europe in this field. After a number of reports (14) the participants held a fruitful discussion on the subject of integrating some of the positive examples into Moldova’s internal policy. This exchange of views was of particular importance in the light of the negotiation process between Chisinau and Tiraspol and the announced constitutional reform aimed at the federalisation of Moldova.

More than 100 participants including representatives of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Presidency, the Parliament of Moldova, professors from different universities and NGOs attended the opening session of the seminar. Representatives of Transnistria, Gagaouzia and different ethnic and linguistic minorities also attended this event. Mr Nicolae Dudau, Minister of Foreign Affairs of Moldova welcomed the participants and presented the address of the President of the Republic of Moldova.

The Venice Commission invited the following speakers: Messrs Boriss Cilevics, Member of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe (Latvia), Mr Cristian Ghinea, Professor, Romanian Academic Society (Romania), Etienne Grisel, Professor, University of Lausanne (Switzerland), Peter Kovacs, Professor, University of Miskolc (Hungary), William Kimlicka, Professor, Queen’s University, Kingston (Canada), Juan Lopez Aguilar, Professor, Member of the Spanish Parliament (Spain), Simon Petermann, Professor, University of Liege (Belgium) and Mr Lev Voronkov, Professor, Moscow Institute of International Relations (Russia). The Moldovan rapporteurs were: Mrs Alla Skvortsova, Institute of interethnic Research of the Academy of Science, Messrs Valentin Dergachiev, Director of Archeology and Ethnography Institute of the Academy of Science, Sergiu Nazaria, Academy of International Relations and Diplomatic Studies and Nicolai Russev, Rector of the Superior Anthropological School.

This seminar received large press coverage and most Moldovan television, radio and written media covered the event¹.

¹ Copies of some articles are available at the Secretariat of the Venice Commission.

After the round table which took place on 5 July, the participants agreed on the following conclusions of this activity:

- a) most modern European States, including Moldova, are multi-ethnic;
- b) the traditional approaches in building a “Nation-State” under modern conditions could be problematic in the light of international human rights standards ;
- c) combining the interests of different ethnic, linguistic, religious and other groups of population consolidates the State;
- d) integration and co-operation of different above-mentioned groups has a positive impact on the economic development of the country;
- e) inter-ethnic peace and the integration of different minorities improves the State’s relations with neighbouring countries and the international community in general;
- f) regardless of different means in building a multi-ethnic State, the participants insisted on the importance of respecting the norms of international law and international practice in protecting minorities, in particular the Framework Convention for the protection of national minorities and the European Charter For Regional or Minority languages of the Council of Europe;
- g) the participants took note of Moldova’s efforts to consolidate its multi-ethnic society and to fully implement Council of Europe’s standards in this field;
- h) the participants expressed the hope that the results of this conference would contribute to the efforts of the authorities and the civil society to consolidate democracy in Moldova

The texts of the reports of this seminar will be published in due course.

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