Expert Workshop on Conflict Management in Moldova

Posted on Thursday 24th March 2011

Stefan Wolff (/staff/profiles/government-society/wolff-stefan.aspx) , Professor of International Security, was the opening speaker at an Expert Workshop on Conflict Management in Moldova at the International Institute for Liberal Politics, Vienna. He provided a detailed and up-to-date analysis of the conflict settlement process to date, its current status and the prospects for a sustainable settlement.

Professor Wolff's analysis started with the observation that the conflict in Transnistria is indeed adequately described as a frozen conflict, as there has been neither violence nor tangible progress towards a solution since 1992. "Even though there are almost a half-dozen more or less concrete proposals for a settlement from the international community and around 150 bilateral agreements between the conflict parties, we are no nearer a solution than we were at the time of the 1992 ceasefire agreement between Russia and Moldova", said Professor Wolff.

The reasons for this state of affairs are manifold, but include the fact that the status quo has been stable for almost twenty years and most people on both sides, including political and business elites have arranged themselves quite comfortably with this, and see no urgency, and in many cases no incentive, to change this. Another obstacle is Russia, but, Professor Wolff noted, it would be too easy to blame Russia alone for the failure to reach an agreement to date. Among the Moldovan political elites, there is little capacity to engage substantively with the complex issues involved in reaching a settlement and making a success of its subsequent implementation.

There is, however, now significant outside interest—from the EU, the US, and to a greater degree also from Russia—to move forward. Professor Wolff added, "this is a great opportunity, especially for the EU to prove its mettle, but it also is a real responsibility to which the EU and its international and local partners will have to live up to." The jury on whether there will be any progress in bringing this conflict on the doorstep of the EU finally to a sustainable settlement is still out.

More information: www.stefanwolff.com (http://www.stefanwolff.com/talks/expert-workshop-on-conflict-management-in-moldova-and-transnistria)

The conflict in Transnistria: where things are, why, and where they might be going (http://www.stefanwolff.com/files/The%20conflict%20in%20Transnistria.pdf)

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