



United States Mission to the OSCE

Response to Montenegro HoM Paraschiva Badescu

As delivered by Chargé d'Affaires Kyle Scott
to the Permanent Council, Vienna
March 19, 2009

Thank you, Madam Chairwoman.

Welcome back, Ambassador Badescu, and thank you for the update and the informative report.

It has been nearly three years since Montenegro became an independent state, and it remains a good news story for the western Balkans. Since you appeared before us last May, the country has applied for EU Candidate Status and progressed with NATO-related reforms. Montenegro has been a constructive regional player, building good relations with neighbors and participating in numerous regional initiatives, including joining the Adriatic Charter in 2008. The OSCE Mission has made key contributions to Montenegro's progress.

Montenegro's elections have met international standards, and while parliamentary elections have been moved up ahead of schedule this year, Montenegro has a good record. The signing by nearly all political parties of an Agreement on Code of Conduct for the Electoral Campaign is a very positive step.

Montenegro continues to make good progress in establishing its defense institutions. Progress toward NATO has been validated by a NATO assessment team, which gave Montenegro high marks for its reforms to date, particularly in the defense sector.

The Mission's work in Police Affairs is exemplary. Projects to enhance the management capacity of the Police Directorate, ensure law enforcement coordination, and increase institutional capacity in training and education are helping to consolidate advances.

While most of the news is positive, there is still work to be done to fully utilize new laws and institutions aimed at strengthening the Rule of Law. The revised Criminal Procedure Code and new structures to coordinate activities against organized crime and corruption could be potent tools in this effort. We encourage Montenegro to follow through quickly with its key initiatives to strengthen the Rule of Law. There is still a need to strengthen the independence of the judiciary, increase prosecutor and police investigative capacity, and empower prosecutors to take on a more prominent role. The Mission should keep up its important activity in these areas and other issues related to the Rule of Law.

The effects of the Financial Crisis are being felt worldwide, and while Montenegro has shown remarkable resilience, the slowdown means that it will need to be more determined than ever to stay focused on vital reform issues. The OSCE Mission, with its objectivity, expertise, and experience, can play an important role in helping to maintain this focus.

Ambassador, we thank you and your staff for your hard work. These efforts are yielding results, to the credit of Montenegro and to the credit of the OSCE Mission, and we are optimistic that this progress will continue.

Thank you, Madam Chairwoman.