



United States Mission to the OSCE

Reply to Montenegro Regarding the October 16 Parliamentary Elections

As delivered by Ambassador Daniel B. Baer
to the Permanent Council, Vienna
October 27, 2016

The United States congratulates Montenegro on the successful conduct of parliamentary elections on October 16. We note the International Election Observation Mission's assessment that the elections were held in a competitive environment and fundamental freedoms were generally respected. In particular, we commend Montenegro for its introduction of an electronic voter identification system, which many supported for providing safeguards against multiple voting.

Procedural irregularities observed by the International Election Observation Mission, and other shortcomings, need to be addressed by competent authorities. We also note the Mission's assessment that the media environment remains politically polarized and lacks political, investigative and in-depth reporting, along with editorial independence. The United States encourages Montenegro to review the recommendations made by the International Election Observation Mission fully once its final report is published, and I want to thank our distinguished colleague from Montenegro for her confirmation already today of the government's readiness to engage. We also look to Montenegrin authorities to conduct an impartial investigation into reported illegal attempts to sway the outcome of the elections.

The United States would like to thank the election observation teams of the Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights and the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly for their vital work. At a time of heightened political tension in Montenegro, it is even more important for the OSCE to help maintain the credibility of the country's electoral and political processes.

The United States strongly supports Montenegro's Euro-Atlantic integration and NATO membership, which offer the best assurances for independence, security, and economic development. In closing, let me underscore that the United States values deeply its friendship with the people and government of Montenegro. As Secretary Kerry said last year, "(We) will stand by you as you work together to further strengthen democratic institutions and the rule of law, promote economic development, respect human rights, and build an active and productive civil society."

Thank you, Mr. Chair.