



**Permanent Mission of Montenegro to the OSCE and other International Organizations in
Vienna**

**Statement by H.E. Ambassador Slavica Milačić, Permanent Representative of
Montenegro at the OSCE Permanent Council Nr 968
Vienna, 24 October 2013**

Mr. Chairperson,

On Sunday, 20th October, Pride parade called "Montenegro Pride-Proudly" was held for the first time in the capital of Montenegro following the Pride march in Budva held on August this year. Peaceful conduct of this event demonstrates the consistency of the Montenegrin authorities and their commitment to ensure the full respect of human rights and fundamental freedoms of all citizens guaranteed by the Constitution of Montenegro and international standards. It also proves the ability of Montenegrin authority to address successfully security risks and threats of violence directed against the Parade and to ensure that the freedoms of expression, assembly and association are respected. As the Minister for Human and Minority Rights of Montenegro Mr. Suad Numanović, who took part in the march, underscored, the Government of Montenegro will not allow for any of its citizens to feel less valuable or less protected. The Government has proven its substantial support and commitment to protect LGBT rights, said one of the organizers of the Pride.

Likewise, the growing maturing of the modern civic consciousness in Montenegro should be noted since the vast majority of the citizens, regardless of their beliefs, condemned the vandalism and violence of perpetrators. Hence, the tribute is to be paid to citizens as well.

The Parade was also attended by high representatives of the Government, Parliament, civil society, media as well prominent domestic figures and diplomatic representatives in Montenegro.

In cooperation with other relevant authorities, Police Directorate undertook numerous preventive measures and preparatory activities prior to the Pride Parade. On the day of the march about 2000 police officers were engaged in providing security arrangements and overseeing the peaceful conduct of the Parade as well as maintaining public peace and order, acting in accordance with the law. Sixty persons were brought to hearing. At the moment, the responsible authorities are taking necessary steps to establish the existence of reasonable suspicion for criminal offences and misdemeanors. It should be noted that no incidents occurred on the route of the Pride parade. Police has professionally and successfully held violent opponents of the march on a safe distance from the Pride parade.

Mr. Chairperson,

(The respect for human rights and freedoms depends not only on high-quality legal and institutional framework, but also on established education, mindset, culture and overall achievements of the society). Equality before the law and equality of all citizens, regardless of their gender identity, racial or ethnic origins, religion or belief, sexual orientation, disability and age, is the core foundation on which the Montenegro is built upon.

Through defining the LGBT policy, including adoption of the Strategy for improving quality of life of LGBT persons 2013-2018 as well as the Action Plan for 2013, the Government confirms the commitment of Montenegro to be further developed on the principle of liberty, democracy, rule of law and respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms. The Government also established the Antidiscrimination Council chaired by the Prime Minister, with the aim of combating any form of discrimination and promoting climate of tolerance and respect conducive to every citizen. In addition, Montenegro has been conducting a number of activities aimed at raising public awareness of importance to combat existing prejudices and stereotypes in the society. But, changes do not happen overnight, especially in a transitional societies that are also traditional and without a long democratic tradition. In the region and beyond, Montenegro is also recognized by the training initiatives developed for the prosecutors, judges, police officers and other civil servants, as well as lawyers and human rights defenders in order to improve their knowledge and sensitivity regarding the protection of and respect for LGBT rights.

In this context, I would like to refer to this year's EC Progress Report on Montenegro, which noted that „The adoption of a Strategy on lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex (LGBT) rights and convictions in cases of attacks on LGBT individuals are positive examples of the authorities' commitment in this area.“

On the occasion of the Pride Parade, Montenegro also hosted an ODHIR mission conducted in framework of the Project "Monitoring of Freedom of Peaceful Assembly in Selected OSCE Participating States". We are looking forward to its findings and we stand ready to make the most of the lessons learned.

At the end, please allow me to stress once again that Montenegro as participating state of the OSCE, member of the UN, Council of Europe, Human Rights Council as well as a country aspiring to full-fledged membership in the EU and NATO is fully committed to the implementation of its international obligations and commitments in the area of human rights and fundamental freedoms. The next Pride Parade has already been envisaged for June 2014.

Thank you, Mr. Chairperson