



United States Mission to the OSCE
Response to Report by
Head of the OSCE Mission in Montenegro,
Ambassador Janina Hrebičkova

As delivered by Ambassador Daniel B. Baer
to the Permanent Council, Vienna
February 20, 2014

The United States welcomes Ambassador Janina Hrebičkova to the Permanent Council for the first time in her role as Head of the OSCE Mission in Montenegro. You bring strong leadership skills to the Mission, and we thank you for your work and the work of your staff in Podgorica.

The OSCE Mission has played an important role as Montenegro advances its European and Euro-Atlantic integration goals. Much is going well, but – as your presentation highlighted – we must pay careful attention to key areas where progress is still needed. Media freedom is one such area. Persistent low rankings by Reporters without Borders, for example, indicate that a healthy media environment simply does not exist in Montenegro. Violent attacks against journalists and media property continue, with little or no progress toward finding and prosecuting those responsible. Although the responsibility for reversing this trend lies with the Government of Montenegro itself, we welcome the continued work of the Mission on media issues and urge it to enlist the support of the Representative on Freedom of the Media whenever possible. We urge the government to take strong action to support a media environment that is free of violence and intimidation, and which nourishes a free exchange of ideas and viewpoints that is crucial for Montenegro's reform and integration efforts. To that end, we also urge the Mission to continue its efforts in support of Montenegro to fight corruption and to promote good governance, transparency, and the rule of law.

We welcome the Mission's assistance to Montenegro to eliminate the risk from excess stockpiles of small arms and light weapons. We commend Montenegrin officials for their commitment to this effort, and we encourage participating States to support it.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.