



United States Mission to the OSCE

Response to the Report by the Head of the OSCE Mission to Montenegro

As delivered by Ambassador Julie Finley
to the Permanent Council, Vienna
May 29, 2008

Thank you, Mr. Chairman,

Welcome back, Ambassador Badescu, and thank you for the update. We add our appreciation for the excellent written report you submitted to us last week.

Montenegro remains a good news story for the western Balkans. Since you appeared before us last March, the country has adopted a new constitution, signed a Stabilization and Association Agreement with the EU, conducted well-regarded presidential elections, and entered into Intensified Dialogue with NATO, a precursor to membership in the Alliance. During the same period, Montenegro continued to enjoy impressive economic growth and continued to make additional contributions to regional cooperation and stability.

In our view, Montenegro deserves to be congratulated for such important achievements as well as for the solid progress it continues to make on its reform agenda.

The country, for example, continues to move forward in reforming its armed forces and police. Your mission has played a vital role in both areas by assisting in the destruction of surplus small arms, light weapons, and ammunition, and through the numerous training and advisory activities that the Mission carries out to promote police accountability and professionalism.

Montenegro also made further progress over the past year in improving the rule of law and reforming its judiciary, for which the government and the Mission also deserve credit. Highlights of the Mission's work from our perspective were the assistance it provided in the development of a National Judicial Reform Strategy and the drafting and promotion of the new Criminal Procedure Code.

With respect to the Mission's democratization activities, we draw attention to the work it did in preparing and adopting a National Strategy on Minorities and the capacity-building work it has done to enhance parliamentary capacity and oversight of state and local institutions.

All of these programs are impressive examples of what an OSCE mission can accomplish when the host government has a will to adopt reforms, and to use the OSCE as a tool to help transform the country in ways that better meet the needs of the population and help fulfill its OSCE commitments.

While most of the news coming out of Montenegro remains positive, Ambassador, much remains to be done to address challenges, such as corruption and organized crime. We encourage your mission to redouble its efforts to help Montenegro take further steps to combat money laundering and strengthen surveillance and control over monetary flows into the country. We have every

confidence that you and your staff can help Montenegro meet these challenges, and we share your optimism about the country's bright future.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.