

**Statement, Head of Mission, "Promoting Stability in South-Eastern Europe
- Montenegro and the Strengthening of Collective Security Systems"
Law Faculty, Podgorica, 29 March 2017**

Thank you very much, Dean Rakočević,
Distinguished Minister Bošković
Distinguished Minister Nuhodžić,
Ambassador Močnik,
Students and staff of the Law Faculty,
A very good afternoon!

First of all, can I say how really pleased I am as the newly appointed Head of the OSCE Mission to Montenegro to be with you here today.

Can I thank you Mr. Dean and the Faculty of Law for providing me with this opportunity.

Having spent a large part of my professional diplomatic career working in this region, it is particularly pleasant to be with you here today discussing such an important topic.

A major reason for accepting your kind invitation was the knowledge that I would be able to meet with young people - many of whom will one day be the future leaders of this country!

And since I am reliably informed that you are all a very active group of young people, I am really looking forward to responding to some of your tough questions and comments!

Your Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

So in standing before you this afternoon, I would like to discuss with you an issue that I believe is important to you, your families and your local communities.

Namely, I wish to contend that the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe – otherwise known as the OSCE - provides an effective and timely forum for senior-level political dialogue on a wide range of political security related issues.

The OSCE is currently the world's largest single regional security organization, bringing comprehensive and co-operative security to an area from Vancouver to Vladivostok.

Allow me to further contend that the OSCE provides an efficient platform for future joint activities to improve the lives of communities and citizens in this area.

The OSCE offers contemporary mechanisms covering the many aspects of the conflict cycle

These aspects relate to the areas of early warning and early action, conflict prevention, dialogue facilitation and mediation support, and post-conflict rehabilitation.

The OSCE also continues to support the building public trust and in working towards a democratic and common security community.

In this sense, the OSCE's approach to security can be seen as comprehensive in the sense that it works to address the "three dimensions" of security as one integrated whole.

And before you ask, the three OSCE dimensions are: politico-military, economic and environmental, and, human aspects of security.

In my view, there are three main factors that are key to the success and sustainability of any sustainable security reform efforts.

Allow me to briefly outline them for you.

First, it is important that these processes are carried out in full consultation with the host country authorities, civil society and technical experts.

Second, security sector reforms require strong national ownership and engagement.

Here close co-ordination between involved ministries, institutions, and reform partners is key.

Likewise, international assistance needs to be tailored to the local need and well co-ordinated.

Indeed, one of the by words for all the work the OSCE does both here and in its other field operations is to avoid overlapping and duplication of effort.

Third, international and regional actors need to work closely together in pursuing common national and regional objectives.

I think this point is clear – if the authorities across the region work together to strengthen regional co-operation, it makes sense that the international community mirror such activities.

For its part, the OSCE continues to assess security threats and challenges within its area.

The OSCE continues to provide effective support to all 57 participating States in order to keep up to date with the security challenges of today.

The OSCE continues to address a range of thematic issues that have an impact on security in the South-Eastern Europe region through its network of field operations.

The OSCE continues to address a range of thematic issues through its specialized Institutions, namely: The Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights; The office of the Representative on Freedom of Media; and The office of the High Commissioner on National Minorities

More widely, the OSCE covers thematic areas ranging from arms control, counter-terrorism, and good governance to democratization, media freedom and human and minority rights.

And, as I have said, the OSCE's field operations are recognized as one of its major strengths.

They can accurately be described as the Organization's "eyes and ears" on the ground.

They also enable the OSCE to better tackle issues as they arise, at the local level.

They play a key post-conflict role across the region, helping to restore public trust.

Finally, they serve to strengthen national capacities through a wide range of concrete projects that aim at responding to the real needs of local communities and citizens.

Although the OSCE has maintained a field presence in the region as far back as 1992 – when the Spillover Monitor Mission to Skopje was deployed - a number of challenges remain.

While rightly noting the significant progress made by this country over the last 20 years.

Certainly long lasting stability in the region is not yet won.

There continues to be a need to deal with challenges inherited from the past

There continues to be a need to support transition process and democratic reforms, promote military transparency as well as increasing national capacities in fighting transnational threats.

All of this makes it clear that regional co-operation, facilitated by the OSCE, is still needed.

The authorities across this region have done well in achieving their respective defence and security strategic objectives, improving measures aimed at increasing public confidence.

In particular, the region continues to successfully harmonize policies and objectives in the field of conventional arms control.

So, as I have said, the OSCE has witnessed a real commitment in the region to further pursue reforms in the security sector.

Security agencies have shown a real commitment to becoming more accountable and transparent in line with international standards, under democratic civilian control and within the framework of the rule of law.

And with pleasure, allow me to highlight the positive example of Montenegro in this context, and why Montenegro is rightly referred to as a “factor of stability” in the region:

Regional co-operation and good neighbourly relations form a key part of Montenegro’s reforms, which contribute greatly to stability, reconciliation and a climate conducive to addressing the legacies of the past.

Montenegro continued to participate actively in regional initiatives such as the South East Europe Cooperation Process, Regional Co-operation Council, and *Igman* Initiative.

Your Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

In concluding my remarks, it is important to say that promoting region stability and strengthening collective systems of security are not some abstract concepts without foundation or relevance to each of your lives.

And I say this quite deliberately for two specific reasons.

First, all of you are citizens of this country.

All of you have families,

And all of you live in your local communities.

Therefore, the issue of regional stability and collective security is relevant to each of you!

Because, by having sustainable systems in place, you and many like you are able to live in peace and be able to live a happy life with you families.

Second, and as briefly mentioned at the beginning of my remarks, all of you sitting here are ambitious to join the legal profession.

Well you have to be since you are sitting here!

Each of you has passion to strengthen the rule of law in this country.

Indeed, some of you will become policy makers as administrators or even as elected officials while some of you will become lawyers.

Therefore, put simply, it will be *your* responsibility in the years to come to help drive the process for regional stability and collective security forward.

It will be *you who* will be the ones that will be called upon to make those key decisions that will help your fellow citizens get the same education they want, get the healthcare they need, get the job they want.

Yet, without sustainable regional stability and collective systems of security you have absolutely nothing.

So, ladies and gentlemen, you have a solemn responsibility before you!

So, in saluting you as you proceed through your academic career, allow me to wish you all possible best wishes in helping your country move forward.

With that, Dean Rakočević, I think I will stop here and as I said at the beginning of my address I look forward with anticipation to the comments and questions from the floor.

Thank you very much and I look very much forward to hearing your comments.