



United States Mission to the OSCE
Statement on Conduct of May 21st
Montenegro Independence Referendum

As delivered by Ambassador Julie Finley
to the Permanent Council, Vienna
May 25, 2006

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

The United States congratulates the people of Montenegro on the peaceful, democratic, and transparent manner in which the May 21st independence referendum was carried out.

Few issues, if any, generate more passion than those involving questions of sovereignty and independence. Few provoke more interest among the electorate. We saw this in the nearly 87 percent of Montenegro's registered voters who went to the polls last Sunday -- a remarkable figure. And few have greater potential, frankly, to provoke instability, division and even violence.

The people of Montenegro and their political leaders have shown great political maturity in dealing with this deeply emotional and historic occasion. For this they deserve our praise and admiration.

Led by ODIHR, the presence of over 600 international election observers and the involvement of nearly 3000 national observers also contributed significantly to ensuring the referendum met international standards for democratic electoral processes. By our count, at least 43 participating States sent observers.

The United States supports fully ODIHR's assessment of the election, which stated that "the referendum was conducted in line with OSCE and Council of Europe commitments and other international standards for democratic electoral processes."

In this referendum, as in other monitoring missions, ODIHR's assessment of election processes gives citizens a neutral, expert evaluation of how well the electoral process met OSCE commitments.

With over 150 elections observed on record, ODIHR has developed a finely-honed methodology and reputation for objectivity that are widely recognized and respected. Because of this, ODIHR remains one of the OSCE's most important assets.

In conclusion, Mr. Chairman, we urge Montenegro and Serbia to work together to resolve the practical issues necessary to implement the will of the people of Montenegro as expressed in the referendum. I like very, very much the phrase "social harmony" just recently used by the ambassador of the Russian Federation. I think that is an absolutely appropriate spirit with which to move forward.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.