



# OSCE welcomes Montenegro as 56th participating State

Ambassador Bertrand de Crombrugghe presents Montenegrin Ambassador Vesko Garčević to the Permanent Council.  
Photo: OSCE/Mikhail Evstafiev

**BY MARTIN NESIRKY**

It's not often ambassadors raise a glass in the Permanent Council. But then it's not often a new country joins the OSCE.

The newly independent Republic of Montenegro took its seat in the OSCE's main negotiating and decision-making body on 22 June, making its debut on the international stage as the OSCE's 56th participating State and the first newcomer since Andorra signed up in April 1996.

There was little fanfare, but there was a genuinely warm welcome for Montenegro's Head of Delegation, Ambassador Vesko Garčević, when the Council's Belgian Chairman, Ambassador Bertrand de Crombrugghe, brought him into the Permanent Council chamber, passing the thick cluster of national flags that now includes Montenegro's double-headed eagle on a rich red background.

Ambassador Garčević took his new place at the table between Monaco and Norway, and behind a temporary nameplate — such was the speed of Montenegro's accession. Having been the Head of Delegation for the former State Union of Serbia and Montenegro, he was already well known in diplomatic circles and was well acquainted with the Organization.

"Like an actor who plays two subsequent roles in the same play, I am both a newcomer and a familiar character," Ambassador Garčević said before his colleagues, who toasted Montenegro with sparkling wine or juice, an unusual if not unprecedented gesture in the Permanent Council.

Montenegro's accession followed the dissolution of the State Union of Serbia and Montenegro after an independence referendum monitored by the OSCE in May, and the formal declaration of independence by the Parliament of Montenegro on 3 June.

"The new State that was born on 3 June chose the

OSCE as the first organization it would join," Ambassador de Crombrugghe told the Permanent Council. "There is no better way to express confidence in this Organization, with all the norms and principles it represents and the democratic governance it promotes."

The decision by the OSCE to accept Montenegro came into effect on 21 June, following a one-week "silence procedure" to hear any objections. None came.

Serbia, as successor State of the now-dissolved union, acceded automatically to the world's largest regional security arrangement. It had already taken up its seat in the Permanent Council under its new shorter name.

Montenegro's Ambassador went out of his way to praise his erstwhile Serbian colleagues.

Serbia's *Chargé d'Affaires*, Miroslava Beham, warmly welcomed Montenegro to the Organization.

She described how Prince Nikola of Montenegro paid a visit to King Aleksandar of Serbia in Belgrade in 1896 after years of rivalries and tensions between the two sovereign States. The *Chargé d'Affaires* quoted Prince Nikola as having said that the two countries' peoples should be "striving compatriots and neighbours of other happy nations in promoting progress, development and civilization".

Pausing for effect, the *Chargé d'Affaires* added: "There is nothing to add to that."

**Martin Nesirky is OSCE Spokesperson and Head of Press and Public Information.**



The Montenegrin flag is added to the display in the Hofburg Congress Centre.