



Slovensko predsedstvo EU 2008
Slovenian Presidency of the EU 2008
La Présidence slovène de l'UE 2008

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Slovenian Presidency of the Council of the European Union

**Permanent Council No. 714
29 May 2008**

EU statement in response to the report by the Head of the OSCE Mission to Montenegro, Ambassador Paraschiva Badescu

The European Union warmly welcomes Ambassador Badescu back to the Permanent Council and thanks her for her comprehensive report.

Mr. Chairman, Montenegro has been an independent state for only two years. But during this short period, it has made considerable progress in pursuit of its Euro-Atlantic aspirations. It has largely put in place the legal and institutional set-up required by its new competences as an independent state. It has held parliamentary and presidential elections which the OSCE-led International Election Observation Missions considered were conducted largely in accordance with international standards. On 15 October last year Montenegro took an important step on its path towards the European Union by signing a Stabilisation and Association Agreement and an Interim Agreement with the EU. A few days later, Montenegro adopted a constitution that was generally in line with European standards and, in doing so, further strengthened its democracy and the rule of law.

The EU welcomes the fact that, throughout this period, successive governments in Montenegro have consistently pursued an ambitious economic and political reform agenda as well as a constructive approach towards regional co-operation and stability.

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Mr. Chairman, Montenegro has come a long way in a short time. But, of course, there is a lot still to be done. The EU calls upon the Montenegrin authorities to address the remaining challenges identified by ODIHR in respect of elections, to implement the new constitution in line with European standards and to continue to broaden the consensus on the basic features of state building. The EU also calls upon the Montenegrin government to push ahead with its economic and political reform agenda and to establish a sustained and effective track record in implementing its agreements with the EU. Specifically, the EU underlines the need for Montenegro to make further determined efforts to develop its administrative capacity, to strengthen the rule of law, the independence of its media and judicial system and to step up the fight against organised crime and corruption.

The European Union believes the OSCE Mission in Montenegro - with its broad mandate covering all three dimensions of the OSCE's work - can help Montenegro to tackle many of these remaining challenges. The EU commends Ambassador Badescu and her team for the continued strong performance of the Mission in implementing its mandate. The EU also welcomes the excellent relations the Mission has developed with the Montenegrin authorities as well as its efforts to involve NGOs and other stakeholders in its activities. We encourage the Montenegrin authorities to continue to work closely with the Mission.

The EU values the Mission's excellent work in promoting democratisation, the rule of law, decentralisation, tolerance, and ethnic minority rights. The European Union commends the Mission's efforts to support the Montenegrin parliament in modernising its structures and services. The Mission rightly regards criminal justice reform and the creation of a professional independent judiciary as priorities. The EU commends the Mission's efforts to strengthen the capacity of the Montenegrin authorities to combat organised crime and corruption, and to promote regional co-operation on border policing and the fight against human trafficking, as well as in matters related to war

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crimes. The Police Affairs Programme is helping to deliver a professional, democratic and competent police service. The EU welcomes the focus of the Mission's economic and environmental programme on the prevention of corruption, money laundering, trafficking and child abuse. The EU also supports the Media Programme which is promoting better legislation and mutual understanding between the media and police, and improving standards of professional journalism.

The EU encourages the OSCE Mission to continue to work closely with the embassies of EU Member States in Podgorica and with the recently established Delegation of the European Commission to Montenegro.

Finally Mr. Chairman we would like once again to thank Ambassador Badescu for addressing the Permanent Council today. She can be proud of her Mission's work in helping Montenegro pursue its aspirations, and can count on the EU's continued strong support. The EU looks forward to further discussion of the Mission's activities in the context of the 2009 Programme Outline.

The candidate countries Turkey, Croatia* and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia*, the countries of the Stabilisation and Association Process and potential candidate countries Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina and Serbia, the European Free Trade Association countries and members of the European Economic Area Iceland and Norway, as well as Ukraine, the Republic of Moldova, Armenia and Georgia align themselves with this statement.

* Croatia and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia continue to be part of the Stabilisation and Association Process

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