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United States Mission to the OSCE



**Response to the Address by the Minister
For Foreign Affairs of Montenegro,
H.E. Milan Roćen**

As prepared for delivery by Ambassador Julie Finley
to the Permanent Council, Vienna
October 25, 2007

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

The United States takes pleasure in joining others in welcoming Foreign Minister Rocen to his first Permanent Council meeting.

Mr. Minister,

Since its declaration of independence last year, Montenegro has emerged on the world stage as a dynamic democracy, one that has committed to the values of this organization. The country is rapidly transforming its economy and is witnessing strong GDP growth, a booming tourism sector, and substantial foreign investment. In a region that has been racked by inter-ethnic conflict, Montenegro's rich mix of ethnic groups co-exists peacefully.

As you have mentioned, ten days ago Montenegro signed a Stabilization and Association Agreement with the European Union. We congratulate you, as others have done earlier, for this significant step forward, as well as for the steady progress Montenegro is making to strengthen its links to NATO through its Partnership-for-Peace program. The United States also congratulates Montenegro on the adoption of its new constitution on October 19.

In sum, Montenegro has made impressive progress on many fronts in little more than a year and there is much to celebrate. Still, Mr. Minister, we think you might agree that significant challenges remain as Montenegro seeks to integrate itself with European and Euro-Atlantic institutions.

Montenegro's most pressing challenge would be to do more to cement the rule of law and fight corruption and organized crime. Another closely related challenge would be to reform and strengthen its judicial sector as doing so will build citizens' confidence in Montenegro's judicial processes and also make the country even more attractive to foreign investors. A third major challenge would be for Montenegro to accelerate its economic revival and continue to promote job creation, particularly in the north. Finally, there is room for Montenegro to strengthen inter-ethnic bonds and to make itself a true model of multi-cultural harmony in a region that has too frequently been divided along ethnic fault lines.

We think you might agree, Mr. Minister, that the OSCE Mission in Montenegro provides your country with valuable assistance in confronting each of these challenges as well as others. We urge Montenegro, as it pursues the reform and integration path it has chosen, to continue to take full advantage of the expertise the mission and the OSCE have to offer. We are confident that Montenegro will become an important source of stability and prosperity throughout the Balkans. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.