



United States Mission to the OSCE

Response to the Report by Head of the OSCE Mission to Montenegro, Ambassador Maryse Daviet

As delivered by Chargé d'Affaires, a.i. Harry R. Kamian
to the Permanent Council, Vienna
March 1, 2018

The United States warmly welcomes Ambassador Daviet to the Permanent Council for her second report as Head of the OSCE Mission to Montenegro.

Madam Ambassador, let me join the Chair and other participating States in thanking you for your timely, detailed, and informative report. I have to take issue with comments that were made earlier by my esteemed Russian colleague. The report was well-written, factual, and objective. I also want to extend my appreciation for your participation in the informal briefings that precede the Permanent Council. My delegation and I find these exchanges – as well as the exchange of views that we have today – complement the information provided in the report. We consider them a best practice that we hope you and other heads of missions will continue throughout 2018. So, thank you very much for that.

Madam Ambassador, Montenegro continues to make progress on its Euro-Atlantic path, most notably by becoming a member of NATO last June – a decision that Montenegro and its citizens made for themselves, and one that continues to enjoy an overwhelming amount of support within Montenegro. I normally would not speak on behalf of the Alliance, but, since NATO was brought up – and I represent a country that is a member of the Alliance – I feel obliged to say that I think I do speak on behalf of the Alliance in saying that the Alliance continues to support, without reservation, Montenegro as a member.

Ambassador Daviet, you and your team have contributed to Montenegro's development through your Mission's efforts to strengthen democratic institutions, the rule of law, civil society, and respect for human rights. The OSCE Mission to Montenegro is an excellent example of showing the necessary flexibility and alignment with national priorities to, as you rightly say in your report, achieve a strategic impact.

The United States strongly supports Montenegro's transition to a prosperous, market-based democracy, fully integrated into Euro-Atlantic institutions, including NATO and the European Union. Montenegro itself has chosen to pursue this path – it is their choice, and their choice alone, to make. We share Montenegro's view that this path offers the best assurances for Montenegro's independence, security, economic development, and – most importantly - well-being for its citizens.

Mr. Chair, we commend Montenegro for inviting ODIHR to observe its presidential elections on April 15 and call on all parties to ensure a genuinely free and fair election process that

reflects the free expression of the people. We note that municipal elections in February were well administered and calm. Madam Ambassador, as you pointed out, the OSCE Mission in Montenegro supported these efforts. Your experts helped introduce at the State Election Commission new voting technologies, strategic planning, and, as some of our colleagues here mentioned, gender mainstreaming. The United States encourages the government of Montenegro to continue to implement ODIHR's recommendations following the 2016 parliamentary elections. A positive development in this area was Parliament's adoption of legislation in December on electronic media, voter registers, and financing political entities and electoral campaigns.

The United States remains deeply concerned about outside interference in Montenegro's elections. As ODIHR reported after the 2016 elections, and you repeated in your report Ambassador, Serbian and Russian citizens were arrested for plotting an attempted attack on election day. In December 2017, Foreign Minister Darmanović told Parliament that Russian security services tacitly facilitated the attempted attack. We commend the government of Montenegro, including its efforts to strengthen its democratic institutions to thwart foreign interference.

The United States has been clear: efforts to interfere in democratic processes of sovereign nations are unacceptable. We must work together to identify these destabilizing activities and impose costs on those who pursue them.

Thank you once again, Ambassador Daviet, for the outstanding work that you and your dedicated team are doing at the OSCE Mission to Montenegro. You have – and will continue to have – our full support.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.