



EUROPEAN UNION

**OSCE Permanent Council Nr 984
Vienna, 20 February 2014**

**EU Statement in Response to the Head of the OSCE
Mission to Montenegro, H.E. Ambassador Janina
Hřebíčková**

The European Union and its Member States welcome Ambassador Janina Hřebíčková to the Permanent Council and congratulate her on the assumption of her duties as Head of OSCE Mission to Montenegro.

We wish you, Ambassador, a successful mandate in heading the mission in Podgorica and assisting Montenegro in furthering the democratic reforms.

We commend the valuable and effective assistance of the small but active Mission in supporting Montenegro in the implementation of OSCE commitments. We appreciate the Mission's coordination with other international actors in the host country, as well as its contribution to good cooperation with other OSCE missions in the region. We welcome the constructive and fruitful cooperation of Montenegrin authorities with the OSCE Mission and OSCE Institutions.

With regard to the programmatic activities of the Mission, we value the efforts of the Mission to address security threats and reiterate our support for the MONDEM Demilitarization Programme. This is an important extra-budgetary project financed by the European Union, many of its Member States, as well as other participating States. We urge the Mission and other partners to continue to support its final phases and other defence reforms.

We welcome the focus of the Mission on increasing the capacity of the Ministry of Interior and the Police to fight organized crime, corruption, drug crime and trafficking in human beings by improving inter-institutional and regional cooperation. It is vital that a credible track record is established regarding the systematic investigation and prosecution of cases of corruption and organised

crime. We also support the planned substantial legal reforms in Montenegro in these areas.

We acknowledge the importance of the Mission's assistance in promoting and protecting environmental security.

In the area of democratisation, we attach great importance to strengthening good governance, improving anti-corruption measures, strengthening civil society, gender equality and preventing domestic violence. We commend recent constitutional amendments aimed at strengthening the independence of the judiciary in Montenegro, although further effort will be needed to implement them.

We welcome the greater focus on solving the issue of displaced persons and the integration of the Roma population, and on tackling discrimination.

We are confident that the Montenegrin authorities will also address shortcomings identified by OSCE/ODIHR concerning election legislation and implement key recommendations. It is vital that the revision of the legislative framework on elections and political party financing will be completed without further delay, and that the legislative amendments are fully in line with European standards and best practice.

We encourage the Mission to continue to provide assistance in promoting a free and vibrant media sector according to international standards; especially by offering assistance in the improvement and implementation of media laws, assistance to Public Service Broadcaster, promoting freedom of expression as well as the enhancement of the capacities of self-regulatory mechanisms, since political interference remains a challenge.

We share the concerns of the Representative of Freedom of the Media regarding the recent and past attacks on journalists and media property in the country. We urge Montenegrin authorities to effectively address safety of journalists and bring those responsible to justice, bearing in mind the chilling effect that a climate of impunity has on freedom of expression and of the media. We encourage the Montenegrin authorities and the Mission to continue to work in this field in close cooperation with the Representative on Freedom of the Media.

We welcome the progress made by Montenegro in the EU accession negotiations and the commitment of Montenegrin leadership to the EU accession process. We commend Montenegro for the preparation of comprehensive actions plans which will guide the country's reform process in the area of rule of law. We encourage Montenegro to ensure effective implementation of all measures foreseen in the Action Plans according to schedule.

We highly value Montenegro's constructive approach towards regional cooperation and stability in the Western Balkans.

Ambassador,

The OSCE Mission plays an important role in assisting Montenegro to consolidate key reforms. It can effectively respond to changes on the ground and focus on areas where our Organisation has a recognised added-value. We underline that for all field operations effective evaluation is essential to ensure efficient use of resources and aids the development of best practices and the process of lesson learning. We would be grateful if you could highlight some of the key impacts made by the mission through its programmatic work in this reporting period.

Finally, we thank you, Ambassador, for your presentation and assure you and your team of our continued support.

The Candidate Countries the FORMER YUGOSLAV REPUBLIC OF MACEDONIA*, MONTENEGRO*, ICELAND+ and SERBIA*, the Countries of the Stabilisation and Association Process and Potential Candidates ALBANIA and BOSNIA and HERZEGOVINA, and the EFTA countries LIECHTENSTEIN and NORWAY, members of the European Economic Area, as well as the REPUBLIC OF MOLDOVA and ARMENIA align themselves with this statement.

* The Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Montenegro and Serbia continue to be part of the Stabilisation and Association Process.

+ Iceland continues to be a member of the EFTA and of the European Economic Area.