

**H.E. MR. MILAN ROCEN, MINISTER OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS OF THE
REPUBLIC OF MONTENEGRO**

ADDRESS AT THE OSCE PERMANENT COUNCIL

Mr. Chairman,
Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is a great honor to be invited to address the OSCE Permanent Council. In Montenegro's modern history, it will be forever noted that this was the first international organization we were admitted to as an independent state. I would like to thank to the Chairman for giving me the possibility to present a short retrospective of our achievements in the period after we restored independence and became the OSCE member. I will give an overview of the current situation in Montenegro as well as of our position towards the OSCE and its significant role in Montenegro.

My pleasure for being here is that bigger because I have the chance to inform you of positive results Montenegro has achieved. I believe, dear friends, that you will agree with me that the way in which Montenegro restored independence - in a democratic and transparent process, with respect to highest European standards, in close cooperation with the EU, Council of Europe, the OSCE and other important international actors - paved our way in the period behind us. In a short time, Montenegro has confirmed that it is a responsible member of the international community which respects its international obligations. This was verified by our swift admission to all relevant global and European international organizations and financial institutions. The peak of our success was signing of the Stabilization and Association Agreement with the EU ten days ago.

This Agreement, prior to which we signed the Agreement on visa facilitation and the Agreement on readmission with the EU, opens a new chapter of our reform efforts on our way to the EU. It is at the same time a recognition of our policy which is absolutely committed to the European and Euro Atlantic integration, the implementation of principles and values of modern Europe, respect for human and minority rights, improvement of democratic liberties and further strengthening of institutions. This Agreement is at the same time an impetus for accelerating the reform processes in Montenegro. However, in the past years we have proved to be a country that is not afraid of the responsibility and challenges. We have demonstrated our maturity and commitment to

democratic values in the most dramatic situations. We are proud that we were the only former Yugoslav state that did not have war or destruction on its soil during our common tragedy, and that we have managed to preserve and strengthen our multiethnic harmony in these hard times.

An important and inevitable stop on our European path is the Council of Europe. Montenegro has become a member of this oldest pan-European international organization in May this year. We have sincerely accepted values, standards and principles Council of Europe is based on, and we are ready to work hard on their full implementation.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Montenegro's strategic goal is integration in the EU and NATO. Particularly important for Montenegro was our membership in the Partnership for Peace. We are convinced that this integration is a precondition for the stability, security and prosperity not only of Montenegro, but the Region as a whole. We believe it is a historical step forward that all the countries of the Region are now united in these common strategic goals. Green light from Brussels for the Western Balkans countries is of crucial importance for our present and our common future. But it is also of crucial importance for the united Europe. By opening the door for Western Balkan countries, Europe is not enlarging, but uniting on its entire continent.

For a small country like Montenegro, having a good and developed partnership and friendly relations with key European countries as well as with the U.S., Russia, China, India, Japan and other leading countries is a great challenge and recognition. However, we are leading a realistic policy and are aware of our size and capacity. But, small as we are, we wish to be a reliable partner and friend to everybody.

It is an honor for a small country, but we are, first and above all, turned to our neighbors. Inseparable segment of Montenegro's strategic orientation is to further strengthen good-neighborly relations and regional cooperation. We have no outstanding issues with our neighbors. Our mutual cooperation will continuously contribute to strengthening stability, which is a prerequisite for faster fulfillment of our European and Euro Atlantic goals. We are fully committed to intensifying cooperation in the Region in the area of free trade, free movement of people, goods, capital, services and information, as well as in joint fight against terrorism and organized crime.

Full respect for the national minorities and ethnic groups rights is inseparable part of deepening regional cooperation. Montenegro is proud of

multiethnic and multi-religious character of its society. Based on this experience, we will work on further improving the rights of ethnic groups that live in Montenegro, in line with the European practice.

Small countries like Montenegro can play an important and positive role in regional context by setting an example. Guided by this motive, Montenegro is active in all political, economic and security regional initiatives.

Montenegro today has political stability and positive economic trends.

On first regular elections after the independence in September last year, Montenegro has gotten a stable Government that set a clear EU and Euro Atlantic agenda as its priority. In the past months the Government made significant contribution to strengthening democracy and the rule of law, cherishing the tradition of multiethnic society and respect for minority rights, development of market economy, fight against corruption and organized crime and general security and stability of the society. We are well aware that more needs to be done when it comes to building stable institutions, strengthening administrative capacities, reform of judiciary and policy, implementation of reform laws, as well as building an integration security and defense system.

All these reforms are taking place in the ambience of economic development, the continuous growth of GDP and incomes from tourism, rapid reduction of unemployment, low inflation, budget surplus and creating precondition for attraction of foreign direct investments, in which Montenegro is a leader in the Region. All macroeconomic data are highly favorable. We are committed to sustainable development, reduction of poverty, protection of the environment and improving living standard of our citizens. We are making efforts so that the people of Montenegro feel as fast as possible the benefits of choosing European and Euro Atlantic road. Everything we do is for the benefit of our citizens, and we are determined to implement European values and standards in the framework of a modern state architecture. We are not burdened with deadlines for implementation of our strategic goals, but with quality implementation of standards fit to modern European civilization.

One of the main challenges for us in the past period was the adoption of the new constitution of the independent state of Montenegro. A week ago, on October 19, the Constitution of Montenegro was adopted, as a framework of a modern Montenegrin statehood. Modern European principles are built in it. The Constitution was prepared in close cooperation with the Venice Commission experts, with guidelines of the Council of Europe. The process of adoption included a thorough debate in the Parliament and in public, and involved all political parties and other political and civil actors. It was a comprehensive and

open process, aimed at finding solutions acceptable for majority of citizens. We have succeeded in it. The Constitution was adopted in the Parliament with majority higher than two-thirds. The achieved political compromise affirmed modern European standards which ensure the civil character of the state, equal status of all nations and citizens of Montenegro, equal status of the religious communities as well as the respect for human rights and the protection of national minorities and ethnic groups living in Montenegro. The Constitution was a normative confirmation of the will of the majority of citizens expressed at the referendum on May 21 last year, as well of the Euro Atlantic orientation of Montenegro.

With this act, the same way as with the referendum process, modern Montenegro demonstrated its political maturity. With respect to the existing differences in our own home, in close cooperation with the international actors, in a democratic and transparent manner, we have found the solution that guarantees the political stability of the country, its prosperity and its European future. In this way we have in the best possible manner completed an important process of establishing a fundamental legal base and independence of Montenegro, as well as of building a modern civil state in European framework.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

The OSCE has played and is playing an important role in Montenegro's aspirations. Montenegro is dedicated to goals and standards of the OSCE set in Helsinki Final Act we signed September last year. The OSCE has been a constructive partner in all important processes in Montenegro in the last decade. We especially appreciate the role of the ODIHR in overall reforms, building and implementing modern election legislation from the moment the ODIHR office was opened in Montenegro in 1999, as well as its role in monitoring and assessing the referendum on independence.

Immediately after independence Montenegro has created conditions for functioning of the OSCE Mission, which has high importance for our development in this phase. The Mission supports greatly the reform processes in Montenegro, in close cooperation with the Government, other state bodies and civil sector. It has a positive role in projects related to the reform of the police, strengthening capacities for fight against organized crime and corruption, building institutions, the reform of the judiciary, assistance to the Parliament as well as in transformation of the defense sector. Its role is particularly appreciated in destroying surplus weapons in Montenegro.

It is with great pleasure and gratitude that I wish to emphasize the good cooperation between the Government and the Mission. I believe that the model

of a small but efficient and mobile OSCE Mission, such as we have in Montenegro, under able leadership of the ambassador Paraskeva Badescu, is an example of a rational and functional organization of the OSCE presence in field.

Montenegro sees the engagement of the OSCE as a part of its EU agenda. We believe that the synergy and cooperation between the EU and the OSCE activities is vital. In that sense, naturally, as Montenegro strengthens its capacities and becomes closer to the EU, we expect that the role of the EU in field becomes more important, and that the work of the OSCE is modified in line with positive changes.

Montenegro will continue to contribute to activities within all three OSCE dimensions. Inspired by core values and principles enshrined in the OSCE crucial documents, the Organization should continue to play an important role in new European political and security architecture. This is particularly true for issues related to new threats to security such as terrorism, organized crime, illegal migration, trafficking in people, environment risks etc. These issues call for a comprehensive approach the OSCE advocates. This, on the other hand, does not mean that the traditional activities of the Organization in areas such as human dimension should be neglected, since the role of the OSCE in this is an important one.

Montenegro supported the idea to organize a thematic round table during the Ministerial Council. Hoping that the forthcoming Ministerial Council would successfully resolve some of the current issues such as chairman-in-office for 2009, scale of contributions, international legal personality of the Organization, as well as having a consensus on Ministerial declaration after a while, I would like to wish best of luck to the OSCE Chairman in Office, Spain, in the forthcoming, for the OSCE always most intensive period.

Montenegro is recognized in the Region today as a European success story. As well as a concrete success of common European foreign and security policy. The role the OSCE had in this is immeasurable.

Finally, I would like to take the opportunity to thank to the OSCE once again for support and assistance it provided to Montenegro, the youngest country in the world, which was created on politically hard Balkan soil, for the first time in its long history, in a peaceful and civilized, European manner.

Thank you for your attention.

Vienna, October 25, 2006