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Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe

The Secretariat

Conflict Prevention Centre

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To: All OSCE Delegations in Vienna

- as agreed
- as per telephone
- as per your/our letter
- for information
- back with thanks
- please telephone
- awaiting your comment

Re: Draft Address of H.E. Miodrag Vlahovic, Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Montenegro to OSCE Permanent Council

The draft address of H.E. Miodrag Vlahovic, Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Montenegro to OSCE Permanent Council is hereby distributed to all Delegations.

**ADDRESS OF H.E. MR. MIODRAG VLAHOVIC, MINISTER OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS
OF THE REPUBLIC OF MONTENEGRO TO OSCE PERMANENT COUNCIL**

Mr. Chairman,
Your Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentlemen

It is indeed an exceptional honour and pleasure to address you as a Foreign Minister of the Republic of Montenegro, the OSCE youngest participating state. What we feel today, sharing this table with the representatives of 55 OSCE countries, is pride and privilege, even more so because the OSCE is the first international organization Montenegro has become part of as an independent and sovereign country. In that context, I would like to take this opportunity and express our special gratitude to the OSCE Belgium Chairmanship for its contribution to the swift and smooth process of our admission.

We believe that our immediate participation in the OSCE is not a matter of coincidence. All those who followed the political and social dynamics in Montenegro in the past several years could witness the important role the OSCE has played in our democratic development, which has resulted in our special appreciation for this Organization and our excellent and fruitful cooperation. The most recent example was the referendum on independence of Montenegro, which was held in close partnership with EU and in cooperation with the OSCE/ODIHR. The support, presence and monitoring of the OSCE/ODIHR contributed immensely to the success and credibility of this process. That is why it was logical that, after Montenegro became an independent and internationally recognized state, the first and special recognition of the expressed democratic maturity of Montenegro came from the OSCE, in which Montenegro became a participating state. Our fast admission to this organization is therefore the proof that our policy was correct and that our efforts and energy invested in overall reforms were acknowledged and rewarded.

Recent referendum in Montenegro bears the mark of a fair, transparent and democratic process. This widely recognized fact is even more important if we have in mind that this process took place in a Region in which, considering its recent past, this has not been typical practice. With continuous efforts, constructiveness and patience, bearing in mind lessons from the past, Montenegro proved that the resolution of state status is not a security issue, but a democratic one. We are particularly proud that with successful conduct of the referendum Montenegro contributed to regional stability and hopefully opened a new chapter in the Balkans, giving positive example that all open issues, no matter how complex, could and have to be solved in a peaceful and democratic manner, with compromise and agreement.

The independence of Montenegro was not a result of a momentary, short-term interest, but of our strategic orientation. The path we chose means we will have to rely on ourselves and our capacities and put all our efforts into further building democracy, the rule of law, security and stability. For this purpose, Montenegro today is turned toward its future which brings many challenges, but also offers many rewards. The manner in which state status issue was resolved gives us just cause for optimism regarding our future, but we must not forget that it is only a precondition for our progress.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

The strategic goal of Montenegro is full integration into European and Euro-Atlantic structures, primarily EU and NATO, because we are convinced that integration is a requirement for prosperity of both Montenegro and our neighboring countries. Regardless of many challenges, the common interest for European and Euro-Atlantic integration of our Region is undeniable, because this is the only way we can create prospect for our progress and stability. At the same time, we are certain that only when our Region is integrated into European and Euro-Atlantic structure, would the idea of integration in Europe have its true realization.

Due to various reasons that were often beyond our control, we have lost some precious time, which gives us extra impetus to move full speed ahead towards the goals before us. That is why Montenegro, immediately after becoming independent, asked for a new mandate for negotiations on Stabilization and Association Agreement with the EU, which were initiated and in large part closed within the state union. Following the positive decision of the European Commission, this process will continue in September, and I am convinced that we will conclude negotiations and sign the Agreement in anticipated dynamics by the end of this year. After that, Montenegro will face the challenge of implementation of the Agreement, adaptation of our system to standards and rules of the EU, strengthening market economy and further building its administrative and institutional capacities necessary for smooth integration in EU.

The priority of foreign policy of Montenegro is development of good-neighborly relations and regional cooperation, through which even the smallest of states can give its contribution to collective welfare and stability. We will especially promote intense regional cooperation in the area of free trade, free flow of goods, people, capital and information, joint fight against terrorism and organized crime, as well as development of joint infrastructure projects. We will also continue to contribute to reconciliation process in overcoming burdens from the past in the Region and in that sense, ethnic harmony and multiethnic and multi-religious character of Montenegrin society will be the driving force of our engagement.

In the context of good-neighborly relations, strengthening friendly relations and cooperation with Serbia is especially important for us. I am sure that we will continue constructive dialogue with Serbia on issues related to deconstruction of the state union, and that we will develop mechanisms for cooperation in all areas of common interest, for benefit of citizens of both states.

A comprehensive approach to security promoted by the OSCE which encompasses political stability, economic development and environmental protection is a prerequisite for efficient fight against greatest threats to security such as terrorism and organized crime, trafficking of drugs, people and weapons etc. That is why Montenegro needs to develop further the control of its borders both on land and sea, modernize travel documents and exchange intelligence and information with countries of the Region.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

In the vision of our future, the OSCE plays one of the key roles. The OSCE has made substantial results in Montenegro and was closely involved and active in overall reforms that Montenegro initiated almost a decade ago. The OSCE Mission assisted in launching reform process and supported its implementation. That is why I wish to stress the gratitude of

Montenegro to the OSCE for all efforts and support it provided, in such way making important contribution to the level of democratic development we reached so far.

Montenegro will continue with its constructive approach towards the OSCE. We have already proved that with our attitude towards establishing OSCE Mission to Montenegro and its mandate. We believe that recently adopted mandate for the OSCE Mission in Montenegro which encompasses all three dimensions of the OSCE – human, politico-military and economic and environmental one, is broad enough to provide OSCE assistance and involvement in all important spheres of Montenegrin society. We also expect to sign soon Memorandum of Understanding between Montenegro and the OSCE through which the OSCE Mission to Montenegro will become fully functional. We are therefore convinced that our productive cooperation will now be further deepened and expanded, and we expect that the activities carried through the OSCE Mission would still be aimed at reform projects and support to the Government in their implementation.

Given its size and strength, Montenegro will be actively involved in all important OSCE activities. Therefore, we follow closely the debate on the reform of OSCE, which will hopefully reinforce its role as a promoter of cooperation and security in Europe. In that context, the obligations, principles and values contained in the OSCE core documents, which entail all three OSCE dimensions, are still a priority of this Organization, because they were willingly accepted by all participating states, and Montenegro will respect, promote and implement them in its policy and activities.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

With the desire to overcome political differences and divisions in our society, we will work hard to build consensus in Montenegro, because the wellbeing of our citizens and European integration of our country is an interest that all of us in Montenegro share and on which we can build trust on. Experience and assistance of the OSCE, where compromise and consensus represent essential practice, in accordance to which different countries manage to find a common ground on many issues, will be valuable to us in this regard.

Parliamentary and local elections, which are to take place on September 10, are the first democratic test for Montenegro after independence. As in the past, we are certain that the OSCE/ODIHR will continue to provide support in this process. At the same time, I wish to take this opportunity and emphasize that OSCE monitoring is more than welcome, in order to assess the legitimacy and transparency of the election process, and we will soon formally invite the OSCE/ODIHR to send observers.

Montenegro also expects further OSCE assistance in upgrading the capacities of its Parliament. In that sense, it is very important for further reform of the Parliament that a new Book of Rules, which will soon be adopted, was drafted with the OSCE involvement.

Continuation of legislative reforms with the aim to harmonize our legislation with the international standards, as well as the implementation of adopted laws are high on the list of our priorities. By the end of the year, Montenegro will adopt a new Constitution, a key legal document in which we wish to build the best standards, values and goals of modern and democratic societies. We will also continue our activities in judiciary reform, since judiciary has to be independent and efficient.

A serious task of reforming security and defense sector as well as strengthening mechanisms for its democratic and civil control is also before us. Our priorities in this area

are implementation of Law on Police and Law on Agency for National Security, as well as of Strategy for fight against corruption and organized crime. We will also continue to develop capacities for integrated border management by modernizing border crossings, electronic surveillance of borders, technological upgrading etc. The reform of defense sector was launched by forming of Ministry of Defense, and army reform that follows will be aimed at developing modern, mobile and efficient professional armed forces that can be partners in cooperation with other countries and security structures. The Government also recently adopted Strategy of National Security which provides a vision of our activities in the security and defense area.

With the purpose of developing progressive and democratic society in which free media and civil sector play a key role, Montenegro will continue to create conditions for independent work of media, and strive to improve cooperation with non-governmental sector.

As multiethnic and multicultural society, recognized for this value in the international scene, Montenegro will continue to build legislative and technical conditions for full protection of minority rights.

In all of the above activities, we are counting on further expert assistance of the OSCE and its institutions.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Joining the OSCE, Montenegro made the first step towards integration, and that initial step in this process is always the most difficult and hence the crucial one. We are convinced that it will be a prelude for our active involvement and contribution not only in the OSCE, but international political scene as well.

We are well aware that our presence here as 56th participating state of the OSCE is both privilege and responsibility to be used wisely, for the advancement of goals and values of this organization, since in such way we best protect our interests. Although a small country, Montenegro is an equal partner in this endeavor, and what we may lack in size we will make up for with our genuine commitment and enthusiasm and our determination to be credible and constructive partner. That is why we count on the OSCE and its participating states to work together closely with us so that we enhance and intensify cooperation in the name of what brought us here together in the first place – fostering prosperity, security and stability for all.

Thank you for attention.