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United States Mission to the OSCE

Response to Statement by Minister for Foreign Affairs of Montenegro, H.E. Mr. Vlahovic

As delivered by Ambassador Julie Finley
to the Permanent Council, Vienna
July 18, 2006

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

It is a pleasure to join others in welcoming Foreign Minister Vlahovic to his first Permanent Council meeting representing a fully sovereign Montenegro and the OSCE's newest participating State.

Mr. Minister, on behalf of the United States, we congratulate you and the people of Montenegro on your new-found independence, and for the peaceful, democratic, and transparent manner in which the May 21st independence referendum was conducted.

The United States shares your vision of a Montenegro fully integrated into European and Euro-Atlantic institutions. Montenegro faces many difficult challenges along this path. We applaud the emphasis you have placed today on developing good relations with your neighbors and regional cooperation, and on contributing to the reconciliation process.

We are very much encouraged to hear you speak of the need to overcome the political differences and divisions that exist within Montenegro itself, and of the necessity to create a multi-ethnic and multi-cultural society.

Finally, we very much welcome your interest in taking full advantage of the newly-established OSCE Mission in Montenegro to help your country in the fight against corruption and organized crime and to promote Montenegro's reform process across all three dimensions.

As you have pointed out, the September 10th parliamentary elections will be Montenegro's first democratic test following independence. How they are conducted, not just on polling day, but in the weeks leading up to the actual election, will say much about Montenegro's readiness to be integrated into Euro-Atlantic institutions.

Given the smooth and peaceful manner in which the state status question was resolved, the United States is hopeful that Montenegro will also conduct the September parliamentary elections in strict compliance with international standards. We wish you and your country every success in this respect and in Montenegro's journey ahead.

We welcome you once again to this organization. The OSCE may have much to offer Montenegro, but we hope and believe that Montenegro will have much to offer the OSCE as well.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.