



United States Mission to the OSCE

Response to Report of the Head of the OSCE Mission in Montenegro, Ambassador Lubomir Kopaj

As delivered by Ambassador Ian Kelly
to the Permanent Council, Vienna
March 7, 2013

The United States joins in welcoming Ambassador Kopaj to the Permanent Council and we thank him for his comprehensive and informative report. The OSCE plays an important role in assisting Montenegro as it moves forward with necessary reforms, and we greatly value the work of Ambassador Kopaj and his staff.

We congratulate Montenegro on the opening of accession negotiations with the European Union this past June. Although not a member of the European Union, the United States recognizes the tremendous value that the EU accession process plays in advancing the peace and stability of the Western Balkans. As the accession process advances, we encourage the OSCE Mission in Montenegro to identify areas in which the EU has a comparative advantage in supporting the progress of reform in Montenegro, and to concentrate its own efforts where it has a unique role to play and where its valuable skills will contribute most effectively.

The Mission's work with the Montenegrin Ministry of Defense and UNDP in continuing the destruction of stockpiles of surplus and unstable Small Arms and Light Weapons (SALW) remains crucial to help ensure the future safety of Montenegro and the region. We urge the Mission to continue its work with the government to adopt and implement the National Strategy and Action Plan to reduce these stockpiles, we welcome participating States' extra-budgetary contributions to the MONDEM project, and we thank Luxembourg for its most recent contribution.

We appreciate the Mission's work assisting with reforms in law enforcement and the judicial sector. We value the European Union's decision to begin its accession negotiations with Montenegro on issues involving the judiciary and system of justice more generally, and again encourage the Mission to focus its efforts in this domain on areas where it has a clear and unique role to play. The Mission has made important contributions to Montenegro's reform process through its police training and capacity building programs and we anticipate that further opportunities will emerge now to strengthen cooperation with other international actors and domestic civil society groups. The work done in this area reinforces the rule of law, and together with a strong and

transparent judiciary, is one of the cornerstones in the fight against organized crime networks.

Another key part of the fight against organized crime, drug trafficking, and corruption is cooperation among regional actors. Montenegro's participation, with Serbia, Albania, and Bosnia, in the Integrated Border Management Strategy and Action Plan, which has been supported by the OSCE Mission, remains an excellent example of effective regional cooperation. We note the increase in joint border police patrols from 32 in 2011 to 728 in 2012 as a result of this cooperation, and look forward to additional collaboration resulting from the bilateral agreement on police matters signed with Croatia. To combat the sophisticated, transnational criminal networks that exist in this region, Montenegro and its neighbors must develop equally sophisticated and cooperative networks which maximize the efficient and effective use of limited government resources.

In that same light, we are pleased to see the Mission working to build up cooperation among government, private sector businesses, and civil society stakeholders on improving environmental impact assessments. Facilitating better working relationships among these different actors is an excellent example of how an OSCE field mission can extend its reach and promote greater public participation in the environmental public policy decision-making process.

The OSCE Mission to Montenegro is small, but has proven that its size does not prevent it from playing an important role in Montenegro. We commend Ambassador Kopaj and his Mission for their efforts, commend Montenegro for the progress it has made, and encourage more progress in the months and years to come. The United States stands ready to work with all participating States to support and extend that effort.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.