

**OSCE CONFERENCE ON COMBATING DISCRIMINATION AND  
PROMOTING MUTUAL RESPECT AND UNDERSTANDING  
Follow-up to the Cordoba Conference on Anti-Semitism and  
Other Forms of Intolerance**

**Statement of the Montenegrin Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs  
Ambassador Milorad Scepanovic**

**Honorable Chairman,  
Your Excellencies,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,**

It is an exceptional honour and pleasure to address you as a representative of the Republic of Montenegro, the OSCE youngest participating state. In a close partnership with the EU and other international organizations, OSCE has been an important player in providing necessary support for improving democratic capabilities of Montenegro, which led to a success story of European policy in the Balkans, enabling the first country in the Region to regain its statehood in a peaceful way, and in compliance with the highest democratic standards. Montenegro is fully dedicated to achieve the OSCE standards and goals, represented in the Helsinki Final Act from 1975. We have confirmed our dedication through our permanent support to the regional and international initiatives aimed at fighting different kinds of discrimination and non-tolerance, as well as through development of the mutual respect and understanding in our own society. To this aim, we welcome all the efforts that have been made by the OSCE.

Having in mind that this Conference represents a follow up to the Conference in Cordoba, when we talked on anti-Semitism, I would like to stress the importance of continued dialogue on this issue. Allow me, in this sense, to take this opportunity to thank Romania, the host of this important event.

Republic of Montenegro is very proud on its multiethnic, multicultural and multi-religious character. In the numerous situations through our, not so distant past, we confirmed our sense for the respect of multiculturalism in our country. Montenegro has managed, in a very dramatic years at the end of the last century, in spite of many, external and internal challenges, and many extremist threats, to preserve its civil peace, ethnic tolerance and stability. As a small country, we are dedicated to preserve our unique and diverse culture.

Cherishing these values, we are promoting the most important principles of the OSCE.

Government of Montenegro has established the Ministry for Human and Minority Rights Protection in 1997. This Ministry has an objective to monitor and study, as well as to protect, rights of national and ethnic groups, in compliance with the Constitution of the Republic of Montenegro, international documents related to this issue, and democratic standards of the European and Euro-Atlantic structures that Montenegro is, or wants to become a part of.

Henceforth, we have also introduced the State Council for Protection of National and Ethnic Rights (Chaired by the President of the Republic of Montenegro), and Parliamentary body - Committee for Human Rights and Freedoms, which, together with a number of NGO's, deal with the issue of minority rights.

In regard to the biggest minority ethnic group in Montenegro, Albanians, I would like to remind that there are 16 media (newspaper, radio and televisions) and one news agency, operating in Albanian language. The regular programs of the State Radio Television, Radio Bar and Radio Ulcinj, include a number of programs in Albanian language. By the decision of the Parliament of Montenegro, there is a part of daily newspaper "Pobjeda" in Albanian language, named "Koha javore", which is partly financed from the State budget. State Television has daily informative programs and weekly informative-educative-entertaining shows, all in Albanian language. In addition, Montenegrin State Television does have periodic programs, which are related to a life, tradition and culture of all minority groups.

Ministry for Human and Minority Rights Protection organizes an event, named "Cultural days of Montenegrin Minorities", during which the representatives of minorities in Montenegro express their achievements in fine arts, literature, music and folklore creativity. Another, regular activity of the Ministry for Human and Minority Rights Protection is organization of round tables and seminars, engaged with the drafting of new education plans and programs for different levels of education. This activity is being conducted in cooperation with the neighboring, so called "mother countries", of the minorities in Montenegro.

In those parts of Montenegro where majority of the population is Albanian, there is a possibility for children and youth to attend schools in their own language. Official documents of these schools are written both in the official language of the Republic of Montenegro, as well as in the Albanian language. Textbooks are being also provided in Albanian language.

Education system of Montenegro enables the children to choose which secondary school they want to attend, and allows the same education right for everyone, avoiding the possibility for any kind of discrimination to take place.

Montenegro is a multiethnic country. Mostly, around 70% of population is Orthodox, Muslims provide for around 23%, and Roman-Catholics 5% of general population. Freedom of denomination, as one of basic human rights, has been regulated by the Constitution of the Republic of Montenegro as well as by the Law on Celebration of Religious Holidays, adopted in compliance with respective international conventions. Religious groups are free to organize religious lessons and schools in a way they find appropriate. School system of religious groups is out of the education system of state schools in Montenegro.

**Mr. Chairman,  
Your Excellencies,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,**

At the end, I would like to stress once again the importance of combating discrimination and promoting mutual respect and understanding. In this light, I strongly believe that Montenegro represents a positive example, and I can assure you of our firm determination to, through the affirmation of our good experience, contribute to overall, cross-border fight against every kind of discrimination. Cherishing our diverse culture and traditions, we are preserving our common identity.

Thank you.