

STATEMENT,  
delivered by H.E.Vesko Garčević, Ambassador of Serbia and Montenegro,  
on the current issues in response to  
the EU and US Statement on the organisation of a referendum in  
Montenegro,  
at the Permanent Council No. 611, May 25 2006

Mr. Chairman,

With pleasure I would like to inform you that on 21<sup>st</sup> May, Montenegro successfully organized the referendum on independence. Undoubtedly, the light motive of numerous reactions to the referendum, ranging from Preliminary Findings and Conclusions of the International Referendum Observation Mission in Montenegro to the EU Presidency Declaration, the conclusions of the observers in the field and the representatives of relevant International organizations can be sublimated in a following conclusion - "the referendum was conducted overall in line with OSCE and Council of Europe commitments and other international standards for democratic electoral process". Accordingly, the polling day proceeding was characterized as "good" or "very good". This judgment is reconfirmed by President of the Republic Referendum Commission Ambassador Frantisek Lipka.

Considering what was at stake, what a delicate way it was and the divergent views on the future of Montenegro of the sides concerned, this is yet another proof that the process led under auspices of EU and coordinated by able Ambassador Lajčak succeeded to meet its end. The conduct of the referendum was a key test of the democratic maturity of Montenegrins. In spite of such challenging task or because of that, not without problems or minor incidents, they have managed to run it smoothly. Doing so, people of Montenegro, ordinary citizens and voters have demonstrated needed maturity putting a cornerstone for the future of their country and its stability.

We would like to take this opportunity and highly commend the role which OSCE/ODIHR has played in this regard. ODIHR and its observer mission were an indispensable and irreplaceable piece in this mosaic. The Mission was fully trusted by both blocks and hardly one who pretends to be serious and responsible political actor in Montenegro can contest the ODIHR's objectivity and its findings and conclusions. The same goes for two

international representatives - ambassadors Lajčak and Lipka who skillfully helped the referendum succeed.

An extremely high turnout – 86,49% gives the referendum a plebiscite character and high credibility for the final referendum's results. As you might have been acquainted with, the preliminary result confirmed by Republican Referendum Commission clearly indicates that the qualified majority voted for independence. An unusual model of qualified majority prepared for Montenegro only, which, no doubt, has facilitated a participatory nature of the process and strengthened its legitimacy may give an impression that slight or tiny majority decided. On a contrary, bearing in mind the high turnout, once confirmed, the margin of 11% between those who voted for and contra is clear, decisive and undisputable. Waiting for the final confirmation of the results, all the sides concerned ought to fully recognize the will of Montenegrins and abide by rules agreed upon and accepted unanimously at the very outset in the Montenegrin Parliament. The rules endorsed by EU as a guarantor of the stability and prosperity not for Montenegro only but the Region as a whole. On this path towards the Euro-Atlantic integration the future Montenegro can't step out from the Region. It is a need to cherish the good neighborly relations and closely cooperate with all the countries in the Region but particularly with Serbia as its key and closest partner.

Before concluding, allow me Mr. Chairman, to express some of my deep personal and emotional observations that inevitably come to my mind while speaking about Montenegro nowadays.

Today is 25<sup>th</sup> May, the day we in former Socialist Yugoslavia had been celebrating for decades as the alleged Tito's birthday. Hundreds of thousand people with flags and flowers celebrated a concept of communist state and its predicted eternal existence. Symbolically, today I am in situation to announce that one of the last pieces of that Yugoslav jigsaw is to fall off the board. The Yugoslav story in 90-ies was obviously tragic, bloody and dreadful consequence of our mistrust and lack of democratic tradition and institutions. Social and political processes have their own dynamic and inherent principles and we are successful as much as we understand their nature. At that time we were walking on the dark Balkans side-roads. I am confident that in the case of Serbia and Montenegro we would be able to understand where the process leads.

Only a year ago, there was a joke very popular in Serbia and Montenegro:

*Prime Minister of Montenegro, Milo Djukanovic is entering the bookstore, approaches a sale-man and asks: Do you have the book "Montenegro – an independent state". Dear Sir, answers sale-man, fairy tails we sell upstairs.*

There are moments when fairy tails come through. Montenegro has been looking for this book 88 years since it ceased to exist as a result of the global unfold after the World War I and the certain political aspirations in the Balkans. I have been looking for that book 15 years since Tito's Yugoslavia broke apart. It seems that we have got it. That has been a long journey requesting a patience, hope and wisdom. Navigation through the shoals and reefs was needed. Today we see the land on horizon. What a relief.

**Address by H.E. Boris Tadić, President of the Republic of Serbia  
on 23.05.2006 in Belgrade, Serbia**

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Allow me to express my satisfaction that the referendum in Montenegro was conducted peacefully and in conformity with democratic procedures. The record turnout testifies to the exceptional political maturity of its citizens, and I congratulate them on that from the bottom of my heart.

Respected citizens,

As the President of the Republic of Serbia I accept the preliminary official results of the Montenegrin Referendum Commission. At the same time, I call on all the political forces in Montenegro and Serbia to help the Referendum Commission as it establishes the official result of the referendum—in this way erasing any doubt about the referendum process. I call on all the citizens of Montenegro to extend to each other a hand of cooperation and reconciliation, and I call on them to work together to build a future to the common benefit of all.

It is well known that I advocated the preservation of the State Union with the belief that its continued existence would provide a better framework for our joint faster accession to the European Union. However, as a democrat and president of a democratic country, I am ready to accept the choice of the majority of Montenegrin citizens.

As I have repeated on numerous occasions, Montenegro will always have Serbia as a reliable friend and a close political and economic partner. I am convinced that Montenegro will formulate an identical position towards Serbia. There will never be walls or barriers erected between Serbia and Montenegro. I will personally ensure that no one erects them.

Respected citizens of Serbia,

At the same time, this day symbolises the renewal of Serbian statehood. I call on all state institutions and political parties to respect the Constitution and laws of the Republic of Serbia.

In her history, Serbia has been the leader and symbol of progress and liberty in the Balkans. All of us, as citizens of Serbia, regardless of our national or religious affiliation, should band together to build a better future for Serbia, for our common home. From this day forward, everything depends only on us. The future of our country and our children is in our hands.

Long live Serbia!