



United States Mission to the OSCE

Response to the Report of the Acting Head of the OSCE Mission to Montenegro, Siv-Katrine Leirtro

As delivered by Chargé d'Affaires Courtney Austrian
to the Permanent Council, Vienna
March 4, 2021

Thank you, Madam Chair.

Ms. Leirtroe, the United States welcomes you to the Permanent Council in your role as Acting Head of the OSCE Mission to Montenegro. This year was a historic one. For the first time in 30 years, Montenegro oversaw the transition of power to a different political party, even as it dealt with the pandemic. This a landmark in Montenegro's democratic development. Your team remained flexible and attuned to the national priorities for reform, and this attentiveness brought about meaningful, concrete results.

The United States applauds Montenegro on its peaceful and competitive parliamentary elections in 2020. ODIHR described the election campaign as "competitive," and election turnout was robust. As you cited in your report, polls show that 81 percent of citizens now believe that governments can change with elections, as compared with 49 percent before the previous elections.

Ms. Leirtroe, your Mission played a role in furthering Montenegro along peaceful, democratic path.

The United States strongly supports Montenegro's Euro-Atlantic aspirations and congratulates Montenegro on opening its last negotiation chapter in June 2020. As you reported, the European Commission cited concerns over a lack of progress on freedom of expression, growing disinformation, and the need for Parliament to undertake a comprehensive review of the electoral framework. We know your Mission already collaborates with a range of partners on building a professional and objective media landscape and improving media literacy in Montenegro. Likewise, we recognize your Mission's assistance to Montenegro on electoral reform. The United States supports your Mission's continued emphasis on those areas.

The United States also recognizes the Mission's work in the fields of gender equality, youth engagement, security and governance. All of this work, of course, was conducted against the backdrop of the pandemic. Your Mission may be the smallest of the OSCE field missions, but by effectively using partnerships, it magnifies the impact of its activities.

Ms. Leirtroe, thank you again for your work and the work of your team at the OSCE Mission to Montenegro. You have our full support.

Thank you, Madam Chair.

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