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United States Mission to the OSCE

Response to the Report by Head of the OSCE Mission to Montenegro, Ambassador Maryse Daviet

As delivered by Chargé d'Affaires Harry Kamian
to the Permanent Council, Vienna
March 5, 2020

Montenegro's sovereign decision to move toward peace, progress, and trans-Atlantic integration has made it the target of malign foreign activity ranging from the Russia-supported coup attempt in 2016 to the inflammatory news stories last month that appeared designed to provoke unrest. Montenegro, however, is building greater resilience to these external pressures through its productive collaboration with the OSCE to strengthen and protect its fundamental freedoms, democratic institutions, rule of law, and civil society. Madame Ambassador, the work of your office in helping to build Montenegro's capacities in these spheres is crucial.

Over the past months, we have seen a significant increase in the dissemination of disinformation and propaganda, supported from abroad and intended to maximize distrust in government institutions and incite unrest in Montenegro. The country has a competitive media environment featuring sensationalist reporting, as you describe in your report.

The OSCE Mission's work in training journalists, promoting media literacy, and protecting media freedom and the safety of journalists is therefore paramount. We would welcome additional efforts in this field, as well as an evaluation of the impact of the Mission's engagement with local partners mentioned in your report.

With regard to strengthening rule of law in Montenegro, the United States is deeply concerned by the prospect of corruption hollowing out democratic institutions and providing fertile ground for organized criminal networks to prosper. We appreciate the Mission's contribution to the professionalization of law enforcement under the newly independent Police Directorate and recognize your success in helping the Forensic Center achieve re-accreditation to meet international standards. We encourage you to focus assistance on building the capacities of the new offices for preventing and countering organized crime, corruption, and money laundering. We welcome your data- and analysis-driven approach in these efforts.

In these and other areas, the United States recognizes that the OSCE Mission in Montenegro is constrained by limited resources. It is therefore important that you continue to coordinate

with both local and international stakeholders, avoid duplication of effort, and seek collaborative partnerships.

The United States supports your Mission's initiatives in strengthening electoral systems, building the capacity of political parties and civil society, defending media freedom, improving security, and enhancing border management. In particular, your work with the State Election Commission is critical to ensuring Montenegrins' voices are heard, and that democratic institutions and processes are strong.

Thank you once again, Ambassador Daviet, for the work that you and your dedicated team are doing at the OSCE Mission to Montenegro. You have our full support.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.