

**CEDAW 67<sup>th</sup> Session**  
**Consideration of the second periodic report of Montenegro**  
**11 July 2017, Room XVI, Palais des Nations – Geneva**

**Introductory Statement by**  
**H.E. Mr. Mehmed Zenka**  
**Minister for Human and Minority Rights of Montenegro**

Madam Chair,

Esteemed members of the Committee,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is my pleasure to present to You the efforts that Montenegro is making to implement the Convention on Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women and to thank You for the opportunity to engage in an interactive dialogue and exchange of views, in order to ensure continuous improvements in the implementation of the provisions and general recommendations of the Convention.

Montenegro is one of the candidate countries for EU membership with the best prospects for the future and it fosters excellent relations with all the neighboring countries, which is an exceptional political achievement in the Balkan region.

Multiethnic state of Montenegro managed, due to the valuable heritage and responsible policy, to preserve co-existence of Montenegrins, Serbs, Bosnians, Albanians, Roma, Croats, which is a unique case in the Western Balkans.

Montenegro is the only country in former Yugoslavia that managed to avoid the war and preserve inter-religious and inter-ethnic harmony. This fact is even more important if one has in mind that Montenegro is most heterogeneous in terms of religion and ethnicity of all the former Yugoslav republics.

At the moment when Montenegro regained its independence in 2006, the Government recognized two main foreign policy priorities – to join NATO and the European Union. The overall foreign policy was guided by these goals. Membership of the NATO Alliance is a

confirmation of the efforts invested and the efficient, progressive policy in the area of the rule of law and protection of human rights and freedoms.

Montenegrin contribution to regional stability significantly exceeds its size in terms of geography and population.

Montenegro is one of the rare candidate countries for EU membership in which the UN System in the country has a very special role, through active and significant support to the pre-accession process. Activities of the UN System include studies and analyses as a contribution to the EC Country Report and practical support to some of the EU negotiation groups.

In that respect, various resident UN organizations implement programs in Montenegro and work in a systematized manner as One UN, focused on sustainable development and human rights. This is particularly important in the light of the European Commission's new approach to the negotiation process, which involves opening the negotiations with Chapters 23 and 24 that cover the area of fundamental rights, freedom, justice and security, as the pace in meeting the obligations in these areas will directly affect the overall accession process.

Montenegro is one of 34 countries in the world that regularly reports on all of its international treaties. Furthermore, it develops an integrated national mechanism to monitor implementation of recommendations issued by various UN bodies in the area of human rights and the Universal Periodic Review Mechanism.

Montenegrin diplomatic activities in the area of human rights focus on the concept of accountability for the protection of human rights, the importance of inter-cultural and inter-religious dialogue, prevention of discrimination, protection of vulnerable groups (national minorities, children, persons with disability, LGBTI population), empowering women and girls and protection of the freedom of opinion and expression.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Membership of the Human Rights Council in the period 2012-15 gave Montenegro an opportunity to determine the direction of human rights policy.

Montenegro's commitment to the UN system is underlined by the fact that Montenegro is a party to the most important conventions and instruments of the UN and the Council of Europe.

The content of the mentioned instruments is available for information to all the actors of the society.

The text of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women is available on the website of the Ministry of Human and Minority Rights in the Montenegrin and English versions. The Convention represents a consensus of all countries to take concrete steps to eliminate discrimination and violence against women.

Montenegro ratified the CEDAW Convention as one of its priority commitments on October 23, 2006, only a few months after the renewal of its independence.

I emphasize that the Government of Montenegro is carefully considering the report on the implementation of this Convention, since CEDAW is the most comprehensive international human rights instrument dealing with discrimination against women in the public and private spheres.

In the period since the last report, Montenegro has improved the legislative and institutional framework for the protection and promotion of human rights and freedoms. The umbrella Law on the Prohibition of Discrimination from 2014 was renewed and fully harmonized with the European legislation on 29 June 2017.

The following were implemented in 2015: amendments were made to the Law on Gender Equality and the Law on the Protector of Human Rights and Freedoms of Montenegro, the new Law on the Prohibition of Discrimination of Persons with Disabilities 2015 was adopted, amendments to the electoral legislation 2014 were implemented, as well as other important laws in the area of gender equality and equal opportunities.

However, the practice shows that women, Roma, LGBTI population, people with disabilities and the elderly are still exposed to social marginalization. The aforementioned changes to anti-discrimination legislation defined more precisely the mandates of existing institutions within the framework of the anti-discrimination system, but there is a clear need for further strengthening of capacities of institutions and their resources, in order to ensure full protection against discrimination.

The key challenges in this area are: insufficient integration of gender components into development policies, the need for further strengthening of administrative capacities and planning of funds for realization of activities related to achieving gender equality.

In this direction, the Government, in cooperation with international organizations and institutions, conducts continuous training.

A system of functional mechanisms for monitoring and horizontal assessment of human rights and gender equality across institutions has not yet been sufficiently developed, but the new Plan

of Action for Gender Equality 2017-2021 has set a clear goal to integrate gender equality policy in all policies at the national and local level.

The government and line ministries, through various gender equality mechanisms, are investing significant efforts to eliminate discrimination against women, primarily in the economic and political sphere, but also to combat and prevent violence. In this direction, the state takes general and special measures.

In order to reduce the level of discrimination against vulnerable groups, the following strategies have been adopted: Strategy for improving the quality of life of LGBT population for the period 2013-2018; Strategy for Social Inclusion of Roma and Egyptians in Montenegro from 2016-2020; Strategy for the Protection of Persons with Disabilities from Discrimination and Promotion of Equality for the period 2017-2021; Strategy for Integration of Persons with Disabilities in Montenegro for the period 2016-2020; Strategy for the Protection Against Domestic Violence 2016-2020; Sustainable Development Strategy 2016-2020; Strategy for Development of Female Entrepreneurship for the period 2015-2020, which will greatly improve the environment for development and skills for starting female entrepreneurship.

Violence against women and domestic violence are still one of the priority issues in the area of gender equality.

The Government is making efforts to create a legal and political framework that provides an adequate response to violence against women and domestic violence.

An effective and sustainable system for the protection of victims of domestic violence has been established, and sustainable measures have been introduced to combat domestic violence.

Raising awareness of this extremely negative social phenomenon among all actors in the society and the wider public of Montenegro, through campaigns and education, has contributed to the increased number of reported cases of violence in recent years.

This is supported by the fact that the number of reported cases of domestic violence, with 487 cases in 2009 increased to 1,678 cases in 2014, and that the number is constantly increasing. The above data indicates an increase in the trust in the institutions of the system.

In Montenegrin legislation enjoyment of women's rights is stipulated in the provisions related to the prohibition of discrimination against women and to the protection of their rights.

By the ratification of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), Montenegro got an instrument for the promotion of women's rights. In this

respect, throughout the process of CEDAW implementation, the Government has been analyzing and improving present laws and practices.

In the process of CEDAW implementation, the Government sees the role of non-governmental as extremely important.

There are regular meetings with non-governmental organizations working in the field of human rights, gender equality, combating violence against women and domestic violence and economic empowerment of women.

Ministry for Human and Minority Rights has completed its annual analysis of the National Action Plan for Achieving Gender Equality 2013-2017, which is a part of the implementation of Montenegro's EU Accession Program for 2014-2020. The analysis looked into the relevance, efficiency, sustainability and effect of the activities set forth in the strategic documents in nine areas (advancement of human rights of women and gender equality, gender sensitive education and education, gender equality in economy, gender sensitive health care, media and culture; equality in the decision-making process in political and public life, international politics and cooperation, institutional mechanisms for the implementation of gender equality).

The analysis sought to get an insight into the good and bad practices and give guidelines for a new strategic document to be focused on the set of activities and measures, measurable indicators and achievable goals and results.

In March this year the Government adopted a new four-year Action Plan for Achieving Gender Equality 2017-2021. This is the third development document in this field so far.

The analysis of the previous document showed that Montenegro made a big step forward in the field of gender equality and harmonization of legislation and measures with the EU, UN and Council of Europe's legislation. This is reflected on the adoption of relevant legislation and amendment of the old legislation regarding non-discrimination, gender equality and respect for human rights of women.

In the coming period our focus should be the implementation and education on the interpretation and comprehension of legislation and public policies concerning the promotion of gender equality, tolerance, non-discrimination at national level and across all sectors.

Good practices in exercising policy of equal opportunities at local level have been further improved. Memoranda on cooperation have been signed with all 23 municipalities and the network of coordinators further expanded, 16 municipalities have already adopted gender equality decrees, in 12 municipalities the councils have been established, while in 11

municipalities local action plans have been adopted. At the moment some 7 municipalities have already set aside special budget for their implementation and by doing so recognized the importance of gender budgeting.

Over 1 700 local government employees have been trained since 2012.

The National Gender Equality Council was established on 24 October 2016 and as such it represents a new institutional mechanism for achieving gender equality.

The Council, being an advisory body, discusses the issues of the implementation of gender equality policy at national and local levels. Along with representatives of relevant institutions, the Council has four NGO representatives.

The Council established eight committees that discuss specific issues relevant for gender equality.

Ministry for Human and Minority Rights in cooperation with the UNDP office to Montenegro and its partner organizations organized the conference on Advancing the Gender Agenda in the Western Balkans and Turkey, in Budva, in December 2016. The conference gathered more than 100 participants from the region and different mechanisms for gender equality. The objective of the conference was to create a regional platform for gender equality and advancement of regional mechanisms for cooperation.

Three priority areas related to gender equality - political participation of women, combating violence against women and economic empowerment of women - have been put in the focus and on the agenda of Government and this goes along with meeting commitments and achieving EU standards in the field of the rule of law and fundamental rights.

Participation of women in political decision-making at central and local level is a crucial and indispensable in establishing gender equality.

The electoral system reforms from 2011 and 2014 proved to be an efficient vessel for enhancing political activism of women.

The 30% quotas that we introduced in electoral legislation together with two additional measures that introduced sanctions and defined positioning of candidate of less represented sex had a considerable impact on local elections in 2014 after which the representation of women rose to 26%. Four municipalities have scored the increase of over 30% with Adnrijevica championing 32% representation of women.

After the parliamentary elections in October 2016, the present Parliament (26th Assembly) has 81 MPs and 19 or 23.46% of them are women. This is an increase in comparison with the 25th assembly of the Parliament which had 15 women MPs or 18.5%. This is the best result so far in the history of Montenegrin parliamentary history.

Executive branch - new Government of Montenegro - formed after the parliamentary elections in 2016, has four female ministers out of 19 ministers, which adds up to 21.5%. (Minister of Science, Minister of Economy, Minister of Public Administration and Minister without Portfolio).

Government of Montenegro pursues policies based on the principles of non-discrimination and respect of human rights and this has been reflected onto the present normative and institutional framework.

In the prevention and elimination of violence against women and ensuring women's access to justice in Montenegro we have made a significant progress in last couple of years, particularly in relation to legislation and raising awareness of the violence against women.

Government of Montenegro adopted the Report on the Implementation of the Law on Protection from Family Violence from 2016. The Report presented the results of the implementation of the law for the period 2010-2015. The Report has also offered recommendations for improvement of protection against family violence.

Montenegro was among the first five states that signed the Istanbul Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence Against Women and Domestic Violence. The Convention entered into force in August 2014 and it obligates harmonization of legislative framework and institutional mechanisms with the Convention's provisions. This year Montenegro has submitted to the CoE's coordination body its report on the implementation of this Convention.

In the beginning of 2017, Montenegro adopted its National plan for the implementation of the Resolution 1325 – Women, Peace and Security. In its National plan Montenegro pledges to integrate gender perspective in the system of security.

Economic empowerment is an extremely important component of development both for gender equality and overall economic progress of Montenegro. Relevant institutions have continuously been taking measures and activities towards economic empowerment of women.

Montenegrin Employment Agency employs measures whose result is women's greater involvement in some programs or trainings they offer. This is expected to lead to women's greater success in finding a job or accepting the one offered by the Agency. Furthermore, the Project:

Support to Self-employment, involves financial and professional support for unemployed person and favourable conditions for women, including lower interest rate of 3%.

The Investment and Development Fund of Montenegro offers credit lines for women through three support programs. These credit lines are highly beneficial and their purpose is to stimulate women in starting and/or continuing their own business.

By means of this program, the Investment and Development Fund invested in 38 projects with total value of almost €1,070 00.

IPA 2014 project whose implementation started in 2016 in cooperation with the Ministry of Human and Minority Rights of Montenegro and UNDP has enabled continuous education and training activities offered to all interested women from Nikšić and the capital of Montenegro.

Montenegro became a member of the initiative “Partnership for Equal Future” dedicated to the economic and political empowerment of women at national and global level. This initiative actually stands for the promotion of national projects and policies in the field of gender equality.

Dear Ladies and Gentlemen,

Montenegro is introducing all international standards and practices towards its integration into the EU. A token of that strive will be the closing of Chapter 23 (Judiciary and Fundamental Rights), 19 (Social policy and Employment) where the advancement of gender equality has a very important place.

In the end, let me remind you that in the period after the previous reporting, Montenegro had made progress in strengthening systems of democracy and rule of law and promotion of standards of equal opportunities.

Montenegro will keep on advancing policies of human rights protection and tolerance and promoting global dialogue through cooperation in combating all forms of discrimination and violation of human rights.

Let me reiterate our commitment to the implementation of the CEDAW Committee’s recommendations and let me thank to all states that contributed their recommendations and thereby helped advancement of mechanisms for the protection of human rights of women in Montenegro.

I want to thank you for your commitment to the consideration of our report and I want to express my hope that our discussion today will be interactive and lead to closer consideration of the system of anti-discrimination and protection of women’s rights in Montenegro. Members of the delegation of Montenegro are at your disposal for any additional queries.



Thank you for your attention.