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Speech by the Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of
Montenegro, Dr. Dragisa Burzan
On the theme of " Priorities in Montenegro's Foreign Policy"

Ladies and Gentlemen,

First of all, I wish to express my gratitude to CSIS (Center for Strategic and International Studies) and to all who are present for your interest in the issues of Montenegro. I have come to Washington many times, of course, on political business; first as an oppositionist and then as a member of the Government of Montenegro. I was always convinced that it is important to first expose political projects and ideas of political syntheses to the critiquing of analytical experts in Washington. That is why I am here with you today. The priorities of foreign policy for Montenegro are a logical continuation of the general political goals brought out in President Djukanovic's Program, which is derived from a new political and economic reality as a result of the five-year reform by the democratic coalition in power. And, they are: perfecting the mechanism for ensuring human rights and freedoms for individuals and minorities, joining Euro-Atlantic integration -EU and NA TO, the furtherance of good-neighborhood relations, the continued development of democratic institutions, economic growth based on already-adopted market legislation, reform of the public administration system, the judiciary and local governance, in keeping with the European Charter. The aforementioned political goals are attainable only if an environment of democratic potentials is activated in the society; these rest upon the initiatives of individuals, the civil sector and democratic government institutions. Such an environment cannot be related to organized crime, cross-border crime, to trafficking or to corruption. That is why the war against these factors is an integral part of the new Government's approach and policies and towards which special energy will be dedicated.

These colossal challenges come at a time when Montenegro is at a new beginning with Serbia. That beginning was established in the interest of regional stability and encouragement of the process of stabilization and association with the EU.

The process of creating a new union has already cost Montenegro a temporary two-year political instability, thus, stagnation in reforms and economy. Yet, besides this, Montenegro gives a genuine opportunity to the Belgrade Agreement and to the Constitutional Charter, well aware of the reasons that directed the international community's support for these.

The Government of Montenegro cannot accomplish its priorities in an environment of constant change in its basic constitutional laws and, for this reason, works towards the strict adherence to and the application of the Constitutional Charter. In such a context, the process of "harmonization" with Serbia must not be the "de-reforming" of already-attained reforms into which not only political energy and time has been expended but also the financial support of the American Congress and the Administration, as well as the EU.

This means that the harmonization of economic systems should be carried out in the direction of European standards and not backwards. For example, the coordination of the customs system to the level of high customs rates effective in Serbia would bring forth more economic misfortune to Montenegro because it would revive a political monopoly and would significantly raise prices, which would be indicative of risks in the reform process. The same approach should apply with regard to those reform steps that Serbia has already made and Montenegro has not.

Harmonization of the Montenegro-Serbia foreign policy must also be carried out in light of higher political goals, as a common policy. The issue of relations towards Kosova, the Iraqi crisis, cooperation with the Hague Tribunal, dedication to the execution of the Dayton Agreement and ensuring human rights, requires anew, positive stance by Official Belgrade. Montenegro has always been ready, not only to observe the viewpoint and standards of the international community, but also to carry them out.

Security and the war on terrorism present an integral part of the current policies and Montenegro wishes to give its contribution to the countries of the democratic coalition of "Good will", which is lead by the United States of America.

The foreign policy of Montenegro will be realized through the system of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Montenegro and through the common institutions of foreign affairs of the Union, as defined by the Constitutional Charter. The emphasis will be placed on cooperation through multilateral policies, international financial and trade organizations and institutions. For bilateral relations, we will strengthen cooperation with strategic partners, the US and the member states of the EU.

The foreign policy of Montenegro will be at the service of democracy and cooperation, new relationship-building in the region, which must not miss the opportunity to join Europe and which must resolve problems for the future and not the problems of its past.
Thank you.