

Representatives of the nongovernmental organizations from Montenegro that take an active part in the development of democracy, civil society, human, minority and women's rights, rule of law, elimination of all forms of discrimination, preservation of the values of multiethnic and multicultural society, education, promotion of European standards, development of environmental awareness,

Convinced that the processes of intensive reforms of political, legal, economic and education systems such as reforms of the police, prosecution authorities and the judiciary, fighting political and other types of corruption and organized crime, opening up of government and free access to information, development of a true public service of Montenegro Radio and TV Company - RTCG, media transparency and dispersion represent the foundations of the development of democracy in Montenegro, and ready to give full contribution to the processes mentioned above,

Wishing to bring to the attention of the national and international public, and especially to that of the EU officials, the challenges that the Montenegrin society is facing in developing democracy and rule of law, resolving the issue of constitutional status of Montenegro and developing sustainable civil society,

Issue the Following

## **Joint Declaration**

### **On the Conditions for Further Democratization of Montenegro**

1. The signatories believe the final solution to the constitutional status of the Republic of Montenegro to be a necessary precondition for further democratization of the society, strengthening of the rule of law, and continuation of the European integration processes in Montenegro. With regard to this, we believe that it is **necessary to organize a democratic and fair referendum on the constitutional status of Montenegro in the Spring of 2006. The referendum needs to be organized in an environment of democratic and fair voting, with impartial reporting of the media, especially the public service of RTCG.**

**The signatories believe that any continuation of the *status quo*, postponement of the referendum, a new agreement among the political elites, or possible delay of validity of the vote contribute to further manipulation with the identity issues, consolidation of the non-democratic forces in Montenegro and Serbia, and considerably reduce these states' prospects for comprehensive social changes and for continuation of the stabilisation and association process.**

2. Being aware of the fact that multiethnic and multicultural harmony represent major historical achievements and the most precious social values of Montenegro,

Likewise aware of the fact that European integrations represent the best framework for the preservation of these, as well as for full adoption of equally important values of the rule of law, social justice, open economy and peaceful resolution of conflicts,

The signatories alert to the fact that resolution of the constitutional status and further democratic progress of Montenegro require urgent start of an internal dialogue in Montenegro that would create the conditions for a consensus on the referendum and the referendum rules and prevent further deepening of divisions.

Therefore, the signatories **invite the local political factors in Montenegro to show good will and true readiness to start a constructive, reasoned and effective dialogue that** would lead to reaching the necessary consensus on resolving the constitutional status and future development of Montenegro. We invite all entities and individuals with political or non-political involvement, in particular the media, to appeal, to the extent of their capacity, to those who hold political power to immediately stop the use of hate speech and the heightening of national tensions in the divided and impoverished Montenegrin society.

The signatories pledge to employ all of their available resources to contribute to the development of the internal dialogue in Montenegro, the creation of a positive atmosphere for peaceful and democratic resolution of this matter, which would serve to strengthen the fundamental values of multiethnic and multicultural harmony and build a sound basis for continuation of the stabilisation and association process.

In the given context, we **invite the European Union to adopt a constructive attitude and, in a neutral manner, through provision of good services, contribute to reaching a consensus on this matter.**

3. Bearing in mind that the continuation of the stabilisation and association process is possible only by fostering the social and economic reforms already begun in Montenegro and by further introduction and implementation of the European standards and values, **we believe that the dynamics of the European integrations should not be conditioned by the final resolution of the constitutional status of Montenegro. This dynamics should be determined solely by the fulfilment of the obligations under the stabilisation and association process.**
4. The civil sector in Montenegro is on a rise and is very actively involved, within the scope of its capacities, in establishing the rule of law, social justice and market economy. The signatories are also intensively working on educating staff from the public, business and civil sector and building their capacity to adopt the knowledge and standards of the EU.

We bring to the attention the process of creating a parallel, parastatal nongovernmental sector through privileges assigned, in distributing the funds

from both local and the Republic budget, to the organizations loyal to the political parties.

In the aim of further strengthening the civil sector and its independence from the state, the signatories **request from the European Union to distribute all of the program assistance intended for nongovernmental organizations directly**, without the authorities of the Republic of Montenegro serving as intermediaries. It is also suggested to the EU that the **funds intended for the development of the civil sector in Montenegro be bigger, more operative, suited to the real needs and serving the purpose of the development of sustainable civil society.**

5. Recalling the correspondence between a group of nongovernmental organizations and the Commissioner for Enlargement Mr. Olli Rehn, the signatories hereby **restate the importance of direct communication with the representatives of the European Union.** To this effect, establishment of a European Commission office in Podgorica would, to a considerable extent, resolve this issue faced by the nongovernmental organizations in Montenegro.

In this context, it would be of great importance for the European officials visiting Montenegro to **continue, enhance and deepen** the communication with the representatives of the nongovernmental sector also, in order to obtain a more comprehensive picture of the Montenegrin society and its needs.

Daliborka Uljarević, Executive Director  
Centre for Civic Education (CGO)

Stevo Muk, Executive Director  
Centre for Development of non-governmental organisations (CRNVO)

Momčilo Radulović, Secretary General  
European Movement in Montenegro (EPuCG)

Djuro Stojanović, President of the Governing Board  
Centre for Monitoring (CEMI)

Srdjan Darmanović, President  
Centre for Democracy and Human Rights (CEDEM)

Nebojša Medojević, Executive Director  
Group for Changes (GzP)

Majda Škrijelj, Executive Director  
Fondation for Roma Scholarship (FSR)

Šerbo Rastoder, Editor in Chief  
Almanah, association and magazine for reasearch, presentation and protection of  
cultural and historical heritage of Bosniaks/Muslims of Montenegro

Adrijana Husić, Executive Director  
Youth Cultural Centre Juventas

Veselj Beganaj, President  
Početak, Nikšić

Ljupka Kovačević, Coordinator  
ŽINEC, Kotor

Zoran Šćekić, Executive Director  
Association of young people with handicap of Montenegro

Biljana Zeković, Executive Director  
SOS phones

Koča Pavlović, Executive Director  
IPG Obala

Sanja Elezović, Executive Director  
Fondation Open Society Institute, Representative Office Montenegro (FOSI  
ROM)