



STALNA MISIJA CRNE GORE PRI UJEDINJENIM NACIJAMA
PERMANENT MISSION OF MONTENEGRO TO THE UNITED NATIONS

801 Second Avenue, 7th Floor, New York, NY 10017

Phone: (212) 661-3700 Fax: (212) 661-3755

STATEMENT

by H.E. Mr. Milorad Šćepanović

Permanent Representative of Montenegro to the United Nations

*Informal interactive dialogue on the Report of the Secretary-General on the
Responsibility to Protect: State Responsibility and Prevention*

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Mr. President,

Allow me to join others in thanking you for organizing today's important debate. Let me also thank Secretary-General for his report on the subject. I express my appreciation to panelists for their useful presentations.

Mr. President,

I would like to focus my intervention on sharing some of Montenegro's experiences and lessons learned in putting together and implementing structural policies and measures aimed at upholding the first pillar of R2P, with particular emphasis on prevention, on national as well as on regional level, of mass atrocity crimes. Being one of the youngest members of the United Nations and coming from the region that has historically been prone to conflicts, Montenegro is now widely recognized as an example of multiethnic, multireligious and multicultural harmony and tolerance where people of different backgrounds peacefully coexist. While still in process of implementing reforms, my country, for relatively short period of time since regaining its independence, has been able to build upon institutional and normative framework that would form a basis for a pluralist society where human rights of all of its diverse people are equally respected and honoured.

In this context, Montenegro has adopted various policies in order to build national resilience, starting from constitutional protection and electoral processes that guarantee representation in the Parliament, so that voice of all constituencies can be heard. Through security sector reform underway, Montenegro's armed forces will be placed under civilian oversight and control. Strengthening

national infrastructure for protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms remains our continuing priority and commitment, which was most noticeably demonstrated when Montenegro accepted 121 out of total of 124 recommendations arising from the this year's Universal Periodic Review of the Human Rights Council. Allowing diverse and vibrant civil society, with independent and plural media, to engage actively and freely and give substantive contribution to the reforms being undertaken in Montenegro is also crucial for assembling cohesive culture that would further consolidate rule of law.

As one of the main pillars of its foreign policy and a matter of strategic orientation towards the advancement in the European and Euroatlantic integration processes, Montenegro attaches great importance and remains firmly dedicated to promoting regional cooperation and fostering good neighborly relations. Dynamic and responsible participation and dedication of Montenegro in different initiatives and organizations of regional character fruitfully contributes to further strengthening of stability and establishing lasting peace and mutual understanding in the region. As a result of such transparent and honest approach, which has given it the label of stability factor, Montenegro remains the only country in the region with no open issues with any of its neighbours. My country is in this sense firmly devoted to the promotion of dialogue and reconciliation so that the whole region irreversibly continues steadfast on the path towards joining the European family of nations, where we all belong.

In the regional and international context, besides being state party to all relevant international legal instruments, allow me to mention that Montenegro was in the group of first states to sign the Arms Trade Treaty. We will do utmost to be among the first 50 countries to ratify the ATT and enable this important instrument to enter into force.

Mr. President,

Let me conclude by underlining significance of States ensuring the protection of their population and prevention of atrocity crimes. We continue to see the tragic and dire consequences of failure of States to act in this regard. Secretary-General rightly pointed out in his report that I quote "the prevention of atrocity crimes requires continuous efforts by States". Political will and leadership are therefore important starting point and necessary preconditions. Montenegro reaffirms its strong commitment to the Responsibility to Protect as a matter of national priority and thus I would like to recall that my country named national focal point for the R2P.

Thank you.