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## **Prime Minister of Montenegro Duško Marković – Address at the Independence Day reception**

**Cetinje, 17 May 2019**

President of the State,  
President of the Parliament,  
Excellencies,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,  
Dear citizens of Montenegro,

Happy Independence Day!

Today we celebrate the thirteenth anniversary of the historic referendum. The referendum at which Montenegro restored its prerogative – to be on its own in its own right – after almost a century.

It was by a courageous, wise and patient state policy, on the one hand, and the democratic strength of all citizens to make a decisive historic decision in a peaceful and dignified manner, on the other, that we rectified the centenary injustice, and on that 21 May 2006 restored the name of our country and our people to the political map of the world.

From the painful experience through which Montenegro went throughout its history, we learned the most important lesson:

That our independence restored at the referendum on 21 May was not bestowed upon us once and for all. And that BELONGING to the community of the most developed countries of today, which not only cherish but also preserve the values of a free and democratic society, stands for its long-term guarantee.

These are the values of tolerance, coexistence and civic state, as the fundamental principles of not only survival, but also development of each and every country.

Everything that has happened over the past 13 years has confirmed the correctness of our strategic commitment to integrate Montenegro into the most advanced communities of the modern world: the North Atlantic Alliance and the European Union.

We turned to the future instead of the mythomaniac past – not forgetting the brightest traditions in which the spirituality, culture and recognisability of our people survived in the

Balkan storms; traditions that have bred freedom and antifascism as the moral backbone of the society, which enabled us to begin building new Montenegro on 21 May – dignified and worthy of respect of its every citizen, as well every one of its allies and partners.

Today, 13 years later, we cannot but be proud of the key achievements:

For almost two years now, we are a member of the North Atlantic Alliance. We have reaffirmed and strengthened our security and stepped up our economic development. Through the negotiation process with the European Union, we are reforming the Montenegrin society in accordance with the highest standards of the democratic world.

We are facing the next challenging stages of the negotiation process, but there is no dilemma whether this part of the job will be successfully done and whether Montenegro will be the first next member of the European Union. We will not be lobbying; we will be preparing for membership instead.

We are also proud of the economic growth rates that have been among the highest in Europe for the third consecutive year. Only on the basis of such a dynamic growth of the economy can we guarantee a better standard of living for all our citizens.

Equally in the south and in the north, as a result of balanced regional development and a strong investment momentum.

Next year, we will have completed the first section of our biggest infrastructure project, the highway from Smokovac to Mateševu, and then proceed immediately to the continuation of works on other sections.

Our country is also a large construction site; and at the same time a prestigious tourism, and growing investment destination.

Hence, Montenegro today and Montenegro 13 years ago – do not look alike!

These are the results that cannot be unseen. Some can only wish to unsee them.

Although aware of the results achieved, we do not turn a blind eye to omissions and mistakes. It would not be logical that there were not any in the past 13 years, given the depth of the reforms we are implementing. We spot them and eliminate them, though perhaps not always with the speed and vigour that citizens expect from us. But I believe that we are becoming more responsible and efficient every day for the benefit of every individual and family.

Dear guests,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

We believe that in the previous period we have made visible progress in strengthening the institutions and the entire administration; especially in the field of the rule of law and the fight

against organized crime, although we all know that these are areas where the work never ends and there are still many challenges ahead of us.

In this context, I deem as extremely important the response of the state to the threat it was exposed to before the previous parliamentary elections. In a transparent judicial process, despite undue pressure from the defendants and attempts to turn the courtroom into a political arena – the Montenegrin judiciary has passed a difficult test in the most complex trial in our history.

In this way, what is referred to in theory as the "power of institutions" is demonstrated in action. Because, every attack on our institutions, in this case on the judiciary, is actually an attack on the state and its existence.

We have confirmed, therefore, that Montenegro is a state that has the capacity and power to defend itself from the gravest terrorist threats that loomed over it, and to bring the perpetrators of such acts to justice.

At the same time, since the renewal of its independence onwards, Montenegro has been democratically built to the extent that its diversity represents its capital and not its burden;

And to the degree of democracy that clearly indicates that dialogue is the only right way to resolve open issues both internally and with our neighbours.

That is why our country is not only recognized as a factor of stability, it is also an ally and partner at every place where civilizational values and democracy are defended.

That is why I call on all political stakeholders on this occasion, among whom are those who consistently do not want to be with us when we celebrate the date of the restoration of our state, to work together for its good and good of its citizens.

In order to achieve this goal, the only requirement is possessing a feature of every human being around the planet – loving and respecting one's own country – because only in this way will it be fully respected by everyone else.

Allow me, therefore, in the run up to this 21 May, to conclude with an all-time message – that Montenegro's independence is our biggest duty!

May Montenegro be eternal!!!

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