

**Intergovernmental Conference on Accession of Montenegro to the European Union,  
Brussels**

**Address by Prime Minister Milojko Spajić**

*Dear Marie & dear Marta,*

*Distinguished ministers,*

*Ladies and Gentlemen,*

On behalf of my delegation and the people of Montenegro, it is my great pleasure to address you this morning! This **24th Intergovernmental Conference on the Accession of Montenegro to the European Union** marks another **decisive step forward** on Montenegro's European path. By adding today's 5 chapters to Chapter 5 already provisionally closed in June, we fulfill the commitment solemnly given to you last December – that the Government of Montenegro would double its efforts and, together with you, finish 2025 by closing twice as many chapters. We delivered! Hand-in-hand with the European Commission and you, the member states, we are proud to reaffirm our staunch commitment to membership in the European Union and demonstrate that enlargement remains a **credible, achievable and transformative process**.

In this mature **post-IBAR phase of negotiations**, we have successfully sought to maintain a careful and responsible balance: continuing to strengthen the **rule of law as the foundation of the European project**, while at the same time delivering tangible progress across other more technical chapters. All the while, straining but not failing to follow the plan we made with the Commission. In an otherwise increasingly unpredictable world, we hope this achievement can embolden others not to shy away from tough reforms or exhausting democratic consensus and institution-building.

The **European Commission's latest annual Report** unequivocally confirms that our efforts to align with EU laws and standards, to embody its values, have not been in vain. Also thanks to your support and guidance, we made record progress across all chapters, scoring better in annual progress in over half of them – **in even 18 negotiation chapters**. At the same time, we continued to witness a steady and sustainable strengthening of our society's overall capacity to absorb and contribute to what it means to be European. In the past year, Montenegro has **improved its level of preparedness in 13 chapters**, while the record of **six chapters** received the **highest possible grade**. Far from being mere abstract commitments, however, the reforms we implemented have a direct positive impact on the lives of our citizens, substantially modernize our institutions, and reinforce the resilience of the society of Montenegro.

We take this opportunity to express our immense gratitude to the **European Commission, all its many services and experts**, for their inestimable support and careful guidance. You stayed up late and worked hard shoulder to shoulder with our civil servants. The bond forged in the sweat of this year's marathon brought us closer to the goal than ever before. Thank you!

Our appreciation is very much due to you, the **EU Member States**. Yours and your leaders' strong political backing and valuable technical assistance have revived the confidence in the enlargement

policy. Ours and that of other candidates. In celebrating the provisional closure of 5 chapters again, as only a few times prior in the history of enlargement, you interrupt a long dry spell since Croatia's 2009 IGC. In doing so, you send a powerful message to your and to all future citizens of the Union -that granular reform adhering to an ever more complex and expanding body of EU law, can still be rewarded and meaningful when married with political determination.

By now we hope you all can see that Montenegro already **thinks and acts as a near future Member State** – fully aligned with the EU's CFSP, with which we have been 100% aligned since Day One of negotiations, strategically planning and responsibly reforming across sectoral policies.

Chapters 3 and 4 address two of the four fundamental freedoms of the European Union, while Chapters 11 and 13 belong among the Union's most important common policies, further underscoring the strategic significance of today's achievement. Today, through the provisional closure of these negotiating chapters, we confirm that Montenegro's European future is not a distant aspiration, but a process firmly underway — guided by accountability, driven by reform, and anchored in mutually reinforcing interests and overlapping visions of peace, growth and prosperity.

Allow me to briefly present Montenegro's progress in five chapters that together reflect the depth, coherence and credibility of our reform process: **Right of Establishment and Freedom to Provide Services, Free Movement of Capital, Company Law, Agriculture, and Fisheries.**

Taken together, these chapters speak not only to legislative alignment, but to Montenegro's readiness to function fully within the internal market and the common policies of the European Union from the first day of membership.

In **Chapter 3 – Right of Establishment and Freedom to Provide Services**, Montenegro has completed a comprehensive reform agenda that guarantees full freedom of establishment, removes remaining nationality-based restrictions, and aligns professional qualifications with EU standards. The updated and consolidated framework for regulated professions, combined with a fully operational Point of Single Contact, demonstrates Montenegro's capacity to ensure legal certainty, transparency, and equal treatment for service providers across borders.

In **Chapter 4 – Free Movement of Capital**, through unprecedented breadth and depth of reforms, Montenegro has established a stable and predictable legal framework that ensures safe and unrestricted capital flows and non-discriminatory treatment of EU investors. Our early integration into the Single Euro Payments Area this year is a concrete example of our advanced practical readiness. Even more importantly than SEPA, at the same time, in cooperation with you, over the past two years all stakeholders have worked bravely and patiently to cast an ironclad firewall of financial integrity, supervision, and anti-money-laundering measures, demonstrating in credible track record that openness and security go hand in hand.

**Chapter 6 – Company Law** illustrates our determination to modernise our business environment in line with the highest EU standards. The adoption of a fully digital company law framework, enabling online company formation, cross-border operations, enhanced transparency,

and reduced administrative burdens strengthen investor confidence and make Montenegro the most advanced candidate in this area.

In **Chapter 11 – Agriculture and rural development**, Montenegro has steadily aligned with the Common Agricultural Policy through quality standards, administrative preparedness, and the structured preparation for the Paying Agency. We are now in a much better position to manage EU agricultural instruments responsibly. With the work continuing right until full membership, we strongly believe that this chapter will have a positive spillover effect on Montenegro's sustainable development and mark a strategic turning point in Montenegro's rural development.

Finally, **Chapter 13 – Fisheries** demonstrates Montenegro's capacity to implement complex EU policies requiring strong governance, control, and data systems. Through a modernised legal framework, upgraded monitoring and inspection systems, and strengthened administrative capacity, Montenegro is now much more prepared to ensure sustainable resource management in line with the Common Fisheries Policy.

*Ladies and Gentlemen,*

These five chapters together show a clear pattern: Montenegro does not approach accession as a formal exercise nor as a fig leaf, but as a once in a lifetime chance for genuine integration through in depth change. We have invested like never before - not only in legislation, but in institutions, administrative capacity, and implementation systems, ensuring that the resulting improved governance in these 5 areas is as effective as it is durable so that Montenegro will be ready to take on responsibilities of a member state on Day 1 of the Accession. Rest assured that remain fully aware that work and reforms in these areas do not stop here. In a way, the true work under now common rules only begins today under your monitoring and supervision.

Nevertheless, we believe that the progress achieved in these chapters fully justifies their provisional closure and sends a strong signal of Montenegro's readiness to move decisively toward the final phase of accession negotiations.

Dear friends and partners,

Once again, allow me to express our sincere gratitude to Marie and the **Danish Presidency of the Council**, to Marta and the **European Commission** for your tireless, day-and-night engagement, and to each and every of your **Member States**, without whom no step on this journey would be possible. Equally, I take this opportunity to wish the best of luck to our Cyprus friends who will take the over the Presidency in a crucial time for our common cause. Let us prove to the world that we are stronger together!

Let me assure you: **Montenegro stands ready at all times** to address your concerns, to accept your support and guidance, and to listen carefully to your criticism. Because this path is possible **only in this way**: if, and only if, we remain united around the same values, the same principles and rules of the game, and ultimately, the same goal. In that spirit, we stand ready to work with you seriously and tirelessly on the Accession Treaty whenever you decide that the time is right.

We have come a long way since the negotiations began back in 2012. And while our own politics and rule of law have required many deadlocks and glass ceilings to be broken over the years, the hard work on the Europeanisation of our rules and capacities in technical sectors like those discussed today has steadily been underway for 13 long years, albeit with a decisive push under our watch. That is why we ask you all not to be intimidated by our ambition. Instead, we hope that you will be reassured by our results. We hope that this morning presents you with one more opportunity to convey such a message to your capitals – that **Montenegro remains a reliable and responsive partner fully committed to its merit-based progression to European Union membership**. Under your guidance, we are responsibly and systematically dedicated to reforms, legal and policy harmonisation, with a clear objective: **to complete this process credibly and join you in this Council as an equal and trustworthy 28<sup>th</sup> partner in 2028.**