

**ADDRESS BY H.E.MR. DUŠKO MARKOVIĆ, PRIME MINISTER OF MONTENEGRO
ON THE OCCASION OF THE INDEPENDENCE DAY OF MONTENEGRO
Podgorica, Vila „Gorica“, Saturday, 19 May 2017, 20:00**

Dear citizens of Montenegro,
Esteemed guests,
Ladies and gentlemen,

Let me congratulate you most cordially the Independence Day of Montenegro, 21st May

The date on which 12 years ago we restored the name of our fatherland to the world map of states and nations;

The date which is paralleled with 13th July 1878 and 13th July 1941 and together with which it forms the historic backbone of our nation.

The date when, for the first time in its history, Montenegro defended the right to its own home and the right to choose its own future, through wisdom and patience instead of heroic victims.

Today, 12 years later, in the run up of the great holiday, celebrating its magnificent values, we have to wonder at the same time:

What have we done over these 12 years of our restored independence?

Where does Montenegro stand today in comparison with May 2006? To what extent have we accomplished our promises and our vision to take care of our own home better and associate Montenegro with the family of the most developed European states and nations?

Twelve years is both a sufficient and insufficient span of time for all the expectations brought to us by 21st May to come to life.

Especially when it comes to the unstable and undeveloped Balkans, where the fires that devoured thousands of human lives and inestimable material goods still linger. They still linger today in our surroundings, threatening every reasonable and progress oriented policy.

In such turbulent region susceptible to challenges, Montenegro positioned itself as an important factor of stability, promoting dialogue and tolerance, building bridges and creating an environment in which all of us shall be less turned to the past, and look more towards the future.

Thus, even as the smallest country of the region, Montenegro has given the greatest contribution to the Balkan stability, aware that there is no progress without stability; there is

no joining to the developed European states; there is no economic recovery nor better life for our citizens.

That was also a foundation on which we built our own path towards the company of the developed ones. For a year already we have been sharing the benefits of our membership in the North-Atlantic Alliance, which ensured, once and for all, the stability of the state, inviolability of borders and security for our citizens. At the same time, it brought us the new economic prospects through intensified interest of credible foreign investors, who recognized Montenegro as a reliable and safe destination for their capital. That is why Montenegrin economy is among the fastest growing ones in Europe.

All of this will be felt even more clearly and directly by citizens in their everyday life in the final stages of joining the European Union. That is no longer a far-fetched nor blurred goal, but a completely evident perspective on our way forward.

Transformation from the least developed republic of former SFRY to a fully-fledged NATO member and an EU candidate country, in the environment and ambiance of which I spoke – is a tremendous progress.

It is about the overall transformation of a society, which does not take place overnight, nor within one decade.

Dear guests,

I wanted to take this occasion particularly to share with you this general assessment on our strategic accomplishments in the years of our restored independence. Because, it oftentimes happens that we fail to see the forest from trees; that given our daily problems that we face, we neglect our main course and crucial goal toward which we are making progress.

This includes security, legal certainty, stability, as well as democratic and economic progress for each and every of our citizens and every family. That is why we shall continue to work in a dedicated way, paying attention to the gist, and not merely bureaucratically.

By ensuring professional and sustainable institutions, legal certainty for all without exceptions, chasing the criminals away from our streets, having zero tolerance for corruption, having a regulated media market, media freedom – not as a declaratory goal – but as an adopted democratic value.

We should achieve this in a restored political dialogue with all political and other stakeholders in the society. We should not be giving up on our political differences and critical relation towards the quality of societal reforms and their dynamics, but we should have the same relation towards the European perspective of the country. The Government is already today

ready for that dialogue. For our Parliament to become a temple of democracy, for civil society to improve our public policy, and for journalists to be free and protected.

Dear citizens,

No one is to remind us of our political and democratic need, the need of new and modern Montenegro, we are capable to respond to this need on our own.

In the same vein, we shall not allow the attempts at meddling with our history and manipulating the year of 1918 that was tragic for Montenegro.

Exactly 100 years ago, at the end of the Great War, our state was taken away from us by grave injustice, even though we suffered many casualties on the winning side in that war. Those who wish to present this as a liberation of Montenegro, by glorifying 1918 actually want to see the year of 2006 and our historic referendum decisions revisited.

However, they are forgetting that Montenegro and its citizens have learnt in the meantime, once and for all, that those who do not remember their past – will have to repeat it!

Dear guests,

Allow me to take this opportunity in the end to thank President Vujanović for 15 years of dedicated performance of the highest state office, because today is also the last day of his presidential mandate.

At the same time, I wish the new President Đukanović, to discharge the office of the President of Montenegro with great success, as of tomorrow, when he takes over that duty.

To conclude, once again, I cordially congratulate you all the Independence Day!

May Montenegro be eternal!