



Government of Montenegro

Mr. Milo Đukanović, Prime Minister

November 15, 2009

Prime Minister Đukanović,

I write on behalf of the Advisory Council of the recent Conference, Justice in the Balkans: Equality for Sexual Minorities. We are a group of international experts on the rights of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgendered persons.

We are grateful for the financial support from the Ministry of Human and Minority Rights for the historic conference recently concluded in Podgorica. We also want to acknowledge the superb performance by the local police officers in safeguarding our security. The Conference was a great success.

At the same time, however, we must express our grave concern about Minister Dinoša's recent public statement for TV "Vijesti" that homosexuals would be "bad news" in Montenegro. Such a statement is unacceptable from any member of your Government, but especially from the Minister whose responsibilities include bringing forward an anti-discrimination law and protecting the rights of all minorities in your country.

Sexual minorities are present in Montenegro as they are in other countries. The Minister should be advancing human rights, not discrimination.

We would like to invite you to ask Minister Dinoša to apologize to the Montenegrin LGBT population for these remarks. Otherwise, we will be forced to conclude that these remarks reflect the official position of you and your Government. As you should appreciate, these statements are inconsistent with the commitments Montenegro must make as part of the EU accession process and with universal human rights under international law.

We note with regret that the Minister did not take advantage of the opportunity provided by our recent Conference to educate himself on the subject of LGBT rights under the law. Minister Dinoša would have learned that sexual minorities exist in Montenegro and that they face seriously negative social attitudes. Minister Dinoša would also have learned that such negative comments about the LGBT population have attracted criticism from both the UN and the ECHR.

As Montenegro prepares its anti-discrimination law, it is important for your Government to appreciate that a well-drafted statute is not enough. There must be a commitment to implement the law and to create a culture of human rights. We understand that the proposed statute will entrust the implementation of the anti-discrimination law with the Ombudsman. We also note with deep concern and regret that neither the Ombudsman nor anyone from the Ombudsman's office attended our Conference, though invited to speak. If the Minister's public statement on TV "Vijesti" is allowed to stand, it is not a good sign for the future of human rights in Montenegro or for the success of the Montenegrin European integration process. We believe that many elements in Montenegro's civil society share these concerns. We believe that the majority of the population in Montenegro wants to make the transition to an open democratic society that is prosperous, integrated with Europe and respectful of human rights.

The remarks made by Minister Dinoša are roadblocks in the path to progress in Montenegro. We urge you to cause the Minister to publicly retract them and to apologize.

Respectfully yours,



R. Douglas Elliott

President of the Conference Council

Members of Conference Council (in alphabetical order):

Prof. Dr. Adam Bodnar, Poland
Prof. Dr. David B. Cruz, United States
Tamás Dombos, Hungary
Stefano Fabeni, Italy
Vasja Grabner, Slovenia
Dr. Helmut Graupner, Austria
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