

Welcome Remarks

Head of OSCE Mission to Montenegro, Ambassador Janina Hrebickova

Seminar

**”Support in Raising Accountability via the Use of Communication Strategies and
in the Development of Press and Public Information Offices in Judicial,
Prosecutorial, and Police Institutions”**

Hotel “Maestral”, 17 November 2014 at 10:00h

**Your Excellency Ambassador Brown,
distinguished Ms. Medenica,
distinguished Mr. Stankovic,
distinguished Minister Konjevic,**

**dear participants,
dear guests,
dear media representatives,
ladies and gentlemen,**

I am pleased and honoured to be here today at the opening of the seminar on the Communication Strategy of the Judicial, Prosecutorial, and Police Institutions.

I wish to welcome all of you and thank you for accepting the invitation to participate at this event.

My sincere thanks go to Ambassador Brown from the US Embassy for joining us and giving us support as a partner in this initiative. We hope to continue with this cooperation in the future.

My special gratitude goes to the Government of Montenegro and the extraordinarily constructive approach of the DPM Markovic, which has recognised the importance of the topic of this seminar, and for the last six month has actively participated in the process of defining the model for improvement of the internal and external communication strategy as the key to a better cooperation of all institutions.

I am truly happy that you, senior officials from the courts, prosecution and police have made yourself available for this seminar, knowing the complex scheduling and other professional challenges you face on a daily basis.

We have a central challenge that we wish to address over the next four days. As pillars of a democratic society, the prosecution, courts, and the police must

communicate openly, proactively and transparently with the public, and particularly, with the media.

All these institutions have an obligation to fulfill the basic human rights of every single citizen – the right to be informed in a correct and straightforward manner and to ensure full freedom of expression. That cannot be materialized if there is impunity for attacks against journalists.

Respecting the human rights of every individual will contribute to building public opinion that is based on reliable and trusted information, help voters make informed decisions during elections, and become more confident in state institutions and the Media. However, all Media must also understand they need to respect the same human rights of every individual in their reporting.

The Government of Montenegro, its institutions, mass media, civil society, and the OSCE Mission have seen various failures of communication on the side of both the institutions and the media, and there are many cases when individuals suffer as a result of disclosure of private, sensitive or confidential information.

This has contributed to serious sociological challenges that can be improved through adherence to laws, respect for human rights including all rights of individuals, mostly protection of private, personnel and official information data and presumption of innocence, and proactive communication.

We hear that some media professionals lack understanding of courts, criminal proceedings, law enforcement, and the necessity for sensitivity and confidentiality in the work of these institutions.

On the other hand, some state officials and institutions tend to adhere to a tradition of not sharing information with mass media and the public, or ignoring the inquiries coming from the media or public as if they did not happen, and struggle with the concept that most of the information they possess belong to the public.

Besides, state institutions often misunderstand the needs that media have on their daily work, resulting in insufficient professional communication between press services of state institutions and media.

I have to say that Montenegro is not unique in this sense. Other countries in the region, as well as many other countries in transition from closed authoritarian societies to democracy have gone through same experiences. However, Montenegro is a small country, with a small society, and consequences of the above mentioned issues have more negative polarizing effects. I am positive, however, that there is a way out of it.

In order to address these challenges, the Mission in co-operation with Montenegrin counterparts envisages a concrete set of activities. The training program that we start today is the first step to help build bridges between state institutions, media and the public, help improve communication and co-operation between them and try to build confidence on the side of public.

We developed this four-day seminar for the judiciary, prosecution, and police, with the goal to help you be more effective and engaging in public outreach and communication. We designed the agenda in such a way that you also have an opportunity to go through two-day substantive training designed to improve capacity through hands-on exercises delivered by prominent experts from the region and beyond.

We hope that participants of this training program will also improve their skills in producing public information tools - press releases, press conferences, and use of social media.

This, I hope, will lead to increased openness and transparency of their respective institutions, as well as the potential to improve the public trust in these institutions. Moreover, participants will be aware of their duties, and the legal limitations on what they are permitted to disclose to the public, and how to disclose it.

This seminar is just the first step of the Mission's long-term project on this subject. Namely, this activity will be extended with additional training activities in 2015 and I am more than happy to be working with many of you again next year.

The project will also assist in raising awareness and engaging the public into this discourse. Montenegrin public broadcaster, Radio-Television of Montenegro, will serve as a platform for that. It will be done in a form of live talk shows.

The Mission plans to support 20 live talk-shows on the topics of responsibilities and accountabilities of the rule of law, law enforcement institutions, as well as mass media and NGO sector in building the bridges within Montenegrin society.

The talk shows will be launched on February 2015. We will also assist all the Media with workshops, based on the expertise of many of our trainers who are here today with us, to build up capacity to understand specifics of the work and sensitivities of the institutions.

The outcomes of these efforts will be presented and discussed at the International Conference at the end of 2015.

Ladies and gentlemen,

I am truly looking forward to working with you again in 2015 and I do wish you a successful gathering, fruitful work, constructive discussions and open communication.

Thank you