

Address of Ms. Jovanka Bogavac, Head of the Delegation of the Parliament of Montenegro to IPU

*(overall theme *Overcoming the pandemic today and building a better tomorrow: the role of parliaments*)*

Development directions of Montenegro in post-Covid era

It is my great honour and pleasure to address you for the first time as the Head of the Delegation of the Parliament of Montenegro to IPU. It is a great privilege and challenge to be a part of this important global organisation. Among the many interesting topics of the 142nd Assembly, all very relevant and important, the theme of the post-Covid era and the role of parliaments and parliamentarians is crucial, given the circumstances we have been living in since 2020.

For Montenegro, last year was both the year of pandemics and the most significant transformation in the modern history of the country. On 30 August 2020, the day of democratic parliamentary elections, the party that had ruled the country for the past 30 years was defeated. After negotiations that lasted for several months, in December 2020 an expert Government was established with the support of the new parliamentary majority.

Montenegro is hardly hit by the epidemics of the Covid-19, and the measures for the fight against the virus have been very rigorous at some stages, especially from the beginning of the pandemics in March until July 2020, when Montenegro was far less in danger. The consequences were grave for the Montenegrin economy, which is largely based on tourism and hospitalities, especially in summer months; the country practically missed out the summer tourist season. The intervention of the state for helping the companies suffering intensely from the measures for the fight against pandemics was significant, but hardly sufficient to guarantee for their survival. Great number of jobs was lost and unemployment increased.

The fact that in May this year mass vaccination started is encouraging, since the initiative has satisfactory turnout in all parts of Montenegro, as well as considering the fact that the number of newly infected this month is in constant decline. All preconditions were

fulfilled that, with good organisation, Montenegrin economy can get a chance to achieve significant growth and stable recovery, and that we, as representatives of citizens, can appeal to everyone still considering where to spend their summer holidays to visit Montenegrin seaside or mountains, and witness traditional Montenegrin hospitality in one of many beautiful hotels, motels or apartments.

In post-Covid era, we have to draw lessons, we have to learn from our own mistakes. The economy that relies too much on one economic sector is not sustainable, therefore it is necessary to work intensely on the development of other segments of economy, primarily energy and agriculture for which Montenegro has excellent conditions. Investment in production and export of healthy food, especially in less-developed north parts of the country, is something that can have long-term positive effects, decrease unemployment in the poorest municipalities, bring to life our abandoned villages, and provide additional pillar to our economy that will ensure long-term sustainability and stability.