

Ladies and gentlemen,

It is my pleasure to speak today on behalf of Montenegro. I am convinced that this is an opportunity to present the mixed migration challenges which Montenegro faces successfully.

Appreciating the importance of migration policy issues and the impact that these trends have on security, political stability, demographic growth and other social factors, we express our readiness and satisfaction to discuss today, in this environment and in this manner, the priorities of migration policy and the support of international organisations.

In this regard, I will take this opportunity to inform you that Montenegro, in the previous period, has continuously implemented activities related to improving conditions in the field of legal migration, combating illegal migration, promoting the values of international protection, full integration of persons with international protection, as well as issues of readmission and reintegration of returnees upon readmission, all on the platform of intensive regional and international cooperation and harmonization with the acquis and best practices of the European Union Member States.

I will use the opportunity to look back at the results achieved and the efforts undertaken by the Ministry of the Interior of Montenegro in recent years, in order to establish a normative framework, as well as an institutional structure that will adequately respond to the challenges of increased influx of migrants.

Namely, Montenegro has adopted two new laws: the Law on International and Temporary Protection of Foreigners and the Law on Foreigners, through which we have largely applied European standards, which has reflected and reflects on the quality and efficiency of exercising the rights of foreigners, legal migration flow management and combating illegal migration through coordinated and clearly prescribed procedures.

It is also an opportunity to remind that through the law we have ensured the foreigners with granted international protection the enjoyment of rights under the same conditions as those we guarantee to our own citizens, especially with regard to rights related to social and health protection and education.

In addition, and, taking into account, first of all, the creation of a functional and efficient system of international protection, the latest Rulebook on the

organization and manner of work of state administration defines that all obligations of the state, starting from granting international protection, reception and accommodation to integration, are under the authority of one body - the Ministry of the Interior.

Also, normative acts have been adopted which regulate voluntary return in more detail, all in accordance with Directive 115/2008, and the signing of a memorandum of cooperation on voluntary return between the Ministry of the Interior, the Police Directorate and the IOM is in progress. The formalization of the cooperation in this area will enable a more efficient and quality implementation of voluntary return and thus will contribute to a comprehensive migration management in Montenegro.

I would like to especially underline that the Agreement between Montenegro and the European Union on the activities carried out by the European Border and Coast Guard Agency has been signed, which will greatly contribute to border security and the fight against illegal migration, and thus to even better protection of our borders from all forms of crime.

Regarding future priorities, it should be noted that the Work Programme of the Government of Montenegro for the IV quarter of 2020 envisages the adoption of the Strategy on Migration and Reintegration of Returnees in Montenegro, for the period 2021-2025.

In this regard, the Draft Strategy was prepared and submitted for a public debate in accordance with the Regulation on the manner and procedure of drafting, harmonizing and monitoring the implementation of strategic documents ("Official Gazette of Montenegro", No. 54/2018), after which it will be submitted to the European Commission in order to obtain an opinion.

In this regard, in the period 2018-2019, a Regional Online Platform for the Exchange of Migration Data in the Western Balkans (WB-MIDEX) has been developed, which allows the competent authorities of the Western Balkans to exchange statistics using forms that are fully in line with Regulation 862/2007. Currently, there is no exchange of statistics between WB-MIDEX, due to the lack of harmonized data in the Western Balkans.

For this reason, Montenegro, in cooperation with the IOM, will develop a Roadmap on migration statistics, which aims to illustrate the current situation and

further developments in migration statistics, providing an indicative timeframe for full compliance with Regulation 862/2007.

Finally, I wish you success in today's work and I express Montenegro's readiness to continue to be a responsible and constructive partner in activities that lead to the improvement of migration system policy.

Thank you for your attention.