

Press Release

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PACE President urges Montenegrins to unite to build a democratic state, calls for constructive relations with Serbia

Podgorica, 11.07.2006 – René van der Linden, the President of the Council of Europe Parliamentary Assembly (PACE), today praised Montenegro for the "political maturity" shown during and after the Referendum which led to independence, and called on the authorities to build "constructive, reciprocally beneficial and friendly relations" with all its neighbours, in particular Serbia.

Addressing the Montenegrin Parliament – the first foreign guest to do so – the President urged the fifty-five per cent of Montenegrins who had voted for independence to "reach out" to those that voted otherwise to "work together towards consolidating Montenegro as a functional and genuinely democratic state".

Mr van der Linden offered PACE's help in achieving this, pointing out that intense co-operation with the Council of Europe and its Assembly would be "crucial" to dealing successfully with the major challenges facing the country. The Assembly is currently assessing Montenegro's legal system for conformity with Council of Europe standards, and will soon give an opinion on its request to join the Organisation.

In his speech, the President also urged greater efforts to curb corruption and organised crime, stressing the need for parliamentarians to set an example, through personal behaviour and the legislation they adopt, and calling for an independent media and judiciary and strong civil society.

Finally, he demanded that Montenegro co-operate with the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia to track down and bring to justice indictees of war crimes. PACE would monitor Montenegro closely on this issue, he said.

During his visit to Podgorica, Mr van der Linden also met President Filip Vujanovic, Prime Minister Milo Djukanovic and Foreign Minister Miodrag Vlahovic as well as the Speaker of the Montenegrin Parliament Ranko Krivokapic.

[Full text of speech](#)

The Parliamentary Assembly brings together 315 members from the national parliaments of the 46 member states.

President: René van der Linden (Netherlands, EPP/CD); Secretary General of the Assembly: Mateo Sorinas.

Political Groups: SOC (Socialist Group); EPP/CD (Group of the European People's Party); ALDE (Alliance of Liberals and Democrats for Europe); EDG (European Democratic Group); UEL (Group of the Unified European Left).