

Montenegro: Statement by High Representative/Vice-President Jose



Montenegro held parliamentary elections, and local elections in five municipalities, on 30 August, under an electoral legal framework largely unchanged since the last elections, in the challenging context of the COVID-19 pandemic. The elections were peaceful and competitive, with high turnout, and were observed by local and international observers accredited by the State Electoral Commission.

The preliminary findings and conclusions of the international observers from the OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR) and OSCE Parliamentary Assembly highlight that the elections were managed transparently and efficiently, but note intensely polarised debate over issues of church and national identity and a number of concerns in relation to undue advantage for the ruling party and the unbalanced media coverage.

Once the OSCE/ODIHR final report and recommendations are issued, all political actors and relevant institutions need to engage in a transparent, decisive and inclusive dialogue on the implementation of these recommendations to address long-standing electoral shortcomings well ahead of the next elections.

We now look forward to the constitution of a new parliament and the formation of a new government that will continue Montenegro's steady path towards the EU. Montenegro is well advanced in its EU accession process and the months ahead must be used to deepen and speed up political and economic reforms, particularly on the rule of law area, where the next milestone ahead is meeting the Interim Benchmarks for the Rule of Law Chapters 23 and 24.

The European Union is fully committed to continue supporting Montenegro's EU accession process as well as economic recovery following the COVID-19 crisis, including through the upcoming Economic and Investment Plan for the Western Balkans.