

Speech: Strengthening financial oversight of Montenegrin Parliament

Poštovani gospodine Sekuliću, gospodine Jovićeviću, dragi Emile, poštovani poslanici i poslanice,

Drago mi je da sam danas ovdje sa vama da obilježimo kraj faze projekta na kojem smo radili sa crnogorskom Skupštinom i Vestminsterskom Fondacijom.

As the representative body of Montenegrin citizens, and the seat of legislative power in the country, ensuring sound legislative scrutiny is central to Parliament's role and essential in delivering accountability. Robust parliamentary oversight of the public finances not only facilitates good use of public funds but enhances the provision of public services and supports the alignment of policy with citizens' needs.

Parliamentary Budget Offices, such as the one the UK has helped the Montenegrin Parliament to establish, are designed to enhance the financial and economic analytical expertise available within a parliament as well as providing independent costing of policies and legislation. They are supposed to be the objective and competent aide to the MPs in performing one of their most crucial roles – holding government accountable for the money it has spent.

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I'm delighted that the British Government, working through the Westminster Foundation for Democracy, has supported the establishment of a Parliamentary Budget Office within the Parliament of Montenegro. The UK's intention is that this facility will enhance the culture of effective financial oversight and scrutiny, thus assisting the country in the process of European integration.

We are grateful to the Parliament of Montenegro for their consistent support for this project, which was not an easy task, and involved a series of complicated institutional and procedural solutions.

The work of the Montenegrin Parliamentary Budget Office has been tested through the times of the post-election period in 2016, formation of the new Government, adoption of Montenegro's first 4-year Fiscal Strategy and the government's plan for fiscal consolidation.

Although few in numbers, the researchers have managed to both build up their capacities and answer the inquiries of MPs, as well as work proactively on the topics they considered neglected or important enough for the attention of MPs.

While the position of the UK remains that we call for all elected MPs to take up their seats in Parliament and in order to better serve those who voted for them, I am pleased that MPs of all parties have drawn on material produced by the Parliamentary Budget Office.

We are particularly glad that within this project, the MPs and parliamentary staff of the Montenegrin Parliament had the opportunity to witness the work done by the Scottish Parliament Information Centre and the functioning of its Financial Scrutiny Unit.

The UK looks forward to the Parliament of Montenegro continuing to develop the Parliamentary Budget Office. There is still work to do to make the Parliamentary Budget Office an integral part of the parliamentary structure, and I welcome the reassurance from the Parliamentary leadership that this will happen soon.

The UK hopes that the products produced by the Parliamentary Budget Office will be used not only by the MPs in the Committee for Economy, Finance and Budget, but by all the committees across the Parliament. Public money flows through all policies of the state, and its oversight is equally important in the welfare sector as well as healthcare or education.

Furthermore, we hope that the products of Parliamentary Budget Office will be read and used by a wider audience outside of the Parliament, as a credible and objective source of data for both the civil society organisations and media.

The UK stands ready to support the future work to strengthen the accountability of Montenegrin institutions, and to continue work which draws on the UK's rich parliamentary experience.

Zahvaljujem se na vašem doprinosu i radujem nastavku razgovora na ovu temu.

Hvala.