



SALA STAMPA DELLA SANTA SEDE **BOLLETTINO**

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BIURO PRASOWE STOLICY APOSTOLSKIEJ دار الصحافة التابعة للكرسي الرسولي

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Declaration of the Cardinal Secretary of State following the meeting with the Prime Minister of Montenegro, during his visit to Montenegro and Serbia (27 June – 2 July 2018)

The following is the declaration issued yesterday by Cardinal Secretary of State Pietro Parolin following the meeting with the Prime Minister of Montenegro, during his visit to Montenegro and Serbia, taking place from 27 June to 2 July 2018:

Declaration of the Cardinal Secretary of State

First of all, I would like to sincerely thank the President of the Government for the invitation to visit Montenegro. The amiability and warmth of his welcome are a confirmation of the friendship and collaboration between this country and the Holy See, a concrete collaboration that continues to develop in many ways.

The historical ties and the more intense dialogue that has developed in more recent years have been further consolidated by the signing of an Agreement, seven years ago, which enables issues of common interest to be addressed, in compliance with the specific features of the Church and the State. It is also our firm hope that the next step that has been agreed, namely the opening of a stable office for the apostolic nunciature in Montenegro, may give new and vigorous impetus to bilateral relations and assist the continuation of our shared journey in favour of the good of both Parties, and of harmony, unity and solidarity.

I thank the state authorities for the respect they show towards the Catholic community in Montenegro. Although it is small in terms of numerical dimensions, it has given and intends to continue to make its contribution to the service of the whole of society. In particular, it is committed to pursuing a fraternal dialogue with Orthodoxy, as well as to maintaining cordial relations with the members of Islam and other religious groups in the country.

I have learned with pleasure that Montenegro, in its ethnic and religious plurality, is updating its legislation with the intention of further promoting religious freedom, indivisible from any other freedom.

Important appointments are planned during my visit. I will have the honour of meeting shortly with the President of the Republic, to whom I already extend my respectful greeting, and subsequently with other state authorities and representatives of civil institutions. The meetings with the diocesan communities of Bar and Kotor are particularly significant.

The President of the Government has informed me on the progress made by Montenegro towards full membership of the European Union. In this regard, the Holy See cannot but rejoice at its integration in the European family of peoples of the continent to which they historically belong. The

The commitment repeatedly reaffirmed towards the Western Balkans by the European Union is a positive sign and it is hoped that it will be further strengthened at the summit scheduled to take place in these days. The European Union is not just an economic and juridical system, but above all a project of peace and a community of principles and values. By joining – as I sincerely hope – Montenegro will also be able to offer its own contribution, as a social model capable of safeguarding the religious and cultural identity of its citizens, of promoting inter-ethnic and inter-religious co-existence, reconciliation and peace, and of supporting respect for the environment, the “common home” and the laws of nature.
