

NEWSLETTER OPEN PARLIAMENT



Parliament of Montenegro

Newsletter on the Parliament of Montenegro Performance ♦ No. 111 ♦ January 2021

CONTENTS

| | |
|--|---|
| Legislative and Oversight activity | 2 |
| News from Parliament | 5 |
| <i>Opinion form published</i> | 5 |
| <i>An exhibition in recognition of celebrating 150 years of journalism in Montenegro</i> | 5 |
| <i>An exhibition on the occasion of International Day of Commemoration in Memory of Victims of Holocaust</i> | 5 |
| Parliamentary Glossary | 5 |
| In Focus | 6 |
| From Catalogue of received presents | 6 |
| Calendar | 7 |

IN FOCUS

Winter Session of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe held

p 6



PARLIAMENTARY GLOSSARY

*Do you know...
what is a Calendar of activities?*

p 5

PARLIAMENT OF MONTENEGRO-FROM CATALOGUE OF RECEIVED PRESENTS

Presents extended by French officials and President of the Croatian Parliament

p 6

OPEN PARLIAMENT



Parliament of Montenegro

Newsletter on the Parliament of Montenegro Performance ♦ Electronic format ♦ Release: monthly ♦ Year XI ♦ No. 111 ♦ January 2021

FOREWORD

Dear readers,

We present to you the key information on activities of the Parliament of Montenegro in the period from 1 to 31 January, which is, in the form of the monthly newsletter "Open Parliament", prepared by Parliamentary Service.

During January, the Sittings of the First and Second Extraordinary Session in 2021, took place.

In January, Committees performed other activities within their oversight role.

In the focus of this monthly newsletter is the Winter Session of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe, which took place on 25-28 January 2021.

The newsletter is published monthly through which the Parliament endeavours to bring its work closer to Montenegrin citizens.

We consider this publication to be very significant as a reliable source of information regarding the work of the Parliament and we hope that you will find it useful.

We remain open to your comments and suggestions, as well as criticism, which can help us bring more quality to our work.

*Respectfully,
Parliamentary Service*



LEGISLATIVE AND OVERSIGHT ACTIVITY

At the **Sitting of the First Extraordinary Session in 2021**, the Parliament of Montenegro adopted, following the repeated voting, the Law on Amendments to the Law on freedom of religion or beliefs and legal status of religious communities, the Law on Amendments to the Law on Credit Institutions, the Law on Amendments to the Law on Recovery and Resolution of Credit Institutions, and the Law on Amendments to the Law on Fiscalisation in the Trade in Goods and Services.

At the **Sitting of the Second Extraordinary Session in 2021**, the Parliament of Montenegro adopted, following the repeated voting, the Law on Amendment to the Labour Law, the Law on Amendments to the Law on Civil Servants and State Employees, and the Law on Supplements to the Law on Health Care.

Other activities of the working bodies

- At its second meeting, held on 29 January, the **Constitutional Committee** considered the issues of eligibility for old-age pension for judges of the Constitutional Court of Montenegro, and in this regard decided to send an act to the Constitutional Court with the question - why the Constitutional Court had not informed timely the Parliament of Montenegro about the fulfilment of conditions for old-age pension for its two judges - Mr Hamdija Šarkinović and Ms Mevlida Muratović and what legal consequences resulted from it. The commission was formed to determine whether the applications for the election of the two judges of the Constitutional Court of Montenegro were submitted in line with the Public Invitation. During the meeting, the Committee considered

the Proposal for the constitutional and judicial review of the Decision on the forming of the Committee on Comprehensive Reform of Electoral and Other Legislation (Official Gazette of Montenegro 129/20); the Proposal for the constitutional and judicial review of the Decision on Amendments to the Rules of Procedure of the Parliament of Montenegro (Official Gazette of Montenegro 129/20) and the Initiative for the constitutional review of the Decision on Amendments to the Rules of Procedure of the Parliament of Montenegro (Official Gazette of Montenegro 112/20).



- At its third meeting, held on 21 January, the **Committee on Human Rights and Freedoms** presented the Report on post-legislative scrutiny of the Law on Prohibition of Discrimination against Persons with Disabilities, made by the researches hired by the Westminster Foundation for Democracy (WFD). On the basis of data set out in the Report and the discussion that followed, the Committee decided to draft a report along with a conclusion, and to submit them to the Collegium of the President of the Parliament of Montenegro for discussion and to the relevant institutions for implementation. In addition, in line with the Conclusion, within its control and oversight role, the Committee will follow the implementation of Recommendations in line with Plan of Activities, and in 2021 it will organise control hearing of subjects in charge of the implementation of the Conclusion and Recommendations. Furthermore, it was unanimously decided that Albin Ćeman, MP and member of the Committee, be a representative of the Committee on Human Rights and Freedoms in the Steering Committee of the Human Rights and Gender Equality Network of Committees in the Western Balkan (HUGEN).



- At its first meeting, held on 12 January, the **Gender Equality Committee**, under the item of the agenda Current issues, discussed their planned activities in the upcoming period. The Committee members postponed electing the Deputy Chairperson of the Committee to one of the future meetings because the Committee members from the opposition failed to submit their nomination for the Deputy Chairperson of the Committee and they did not attend the meeting.
- At the second meeting of the Gender Equality Committee, held on 29 January, organised in cooperation with the Westminster Foundation for Democracy (WFD), the Report on post-legislative scrutiny of selected articles of the Law on Amendments to the Law on Gender Equality was presented online. The Report was drafted in 2020, upon the initiative of the Gender Equality Committee, with the support of the Westminster Foundation for Democracy, within the regional parliamentary programme “Creation of the Parliamentary Network on Human Rights in the Western Balkans”, implemented by the WFD with the support of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Kingdom of Norway, in the period from April 2019 to November 2021, aimed at strengthening cooperation among Western Balkans parliaments via establishing a regional network of working bodies for human rights and gender equality. The following spoke in the introductory part: Committee Chairperson Božena Jelušić; Ms Maria Mousmouti, Institute of Advanced Legal Studies (University of London); and programme manager of the WFD Western Balkans Mr Ivan Radojević. Regional project the Human Rights and Gender Equality Network of Committees in the Western Balkan (HUGEN) and the post-legislative scrutiny pilot-project,



which was implemented by HUGEN, was presented by programme manager of the WFD Western Balkans Mr Ivan Radojević; while Ms Maria Mousmouti, Institute of Advanced Legal Studies (University of London) talked about the post-legislative scrutiny and the significance of scrutiny over the implementation of laws. The Report on post-legislative scrutiny of selected articles of the Law on Amendments to the Law on Gender Equality was presented by independent expert Ms Olgica Lola Milojević, author of the Report. She said that the purpose of implementing post-legislative scrutiny of selected articles of the Law on Amendments to the Law on Gender Equality was to assess whether all articles and interventions from the strategic

documents achieved the planned results. The Assessment Report was created to analyse results of the implementation of the Law's Articles 13a and 13b, as well as broader implementation of Art. 13, 33a, and 14, which were directly linked to the selected articles. The analysis period was 2015-2019/20, namely since the moment of the adoption of the Law and the relevant action plans, ending with the first quarter of 2020. The Report's text was written and organised in five chapters, in line with the harmonised methodological matrix. The recommendations were based on the analysis of findings, conclusions, and lessons learned, as well as on consultations with various actors who contributed to the research process. Significant contributions were also given by representatives of gender mechanisms based on the legislative and executive powers, representatives of the ministries and other public institutions responsible for conducting activities and implementing the Law, as well as other representatives of the civil society and the media.

- At its sixth meeting, held on 20 January, members of the **Administrative Committee** decided to propose to the Parliament of Montenegro to deprive of office Mr Aleksa Ivanović as the President of the State Election Commission. The Committee unanimously determined the List of timely and complete proposals for candidates for a member of the Council of the Agency for Electronic Media according to the authorised proposer as specified by the Repeated public Invitation No 00-63-14/20-222 of 17 November 2020, along with the proposal by Mr Branko Bošković from the University of Donja Gorica. Pursuant to Article 28 (1) of the Law on Electronic Media, the Committee decided to publish the List of timely and complete proposals for candidates for a member of the Council of the Agency for Electronic Media in the Official Gazette of Montenegro on the website of the Parliament of Montenegro and in the daily newspapers Dan. Upon the proposal made by the MP Group "In Black and White", the Committee determined several proposals for decisions:- Proposal for the Decision on dismissal and election of one member of the Constitutional Committee of the Parliament of Montenegro. The Committee decided to propose to the Parliament to deprive of office Ms Božena

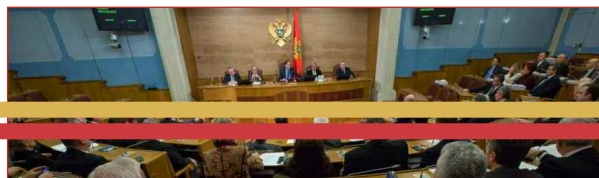


Jelušić, and elect Ms Suada Zoronjić as a member of the Constitutional Committee of the Parliament of Montenegro;- Proposal for the Decision on dismissal and

election of one member of the Commission for Monitoring and Control of the Privatisation Procedure. The Committee decided to propose to the Parliament to deprive of office Mr Miloš Konatar as the member of the Commission for Monitoring and Control of the Privatisation Procedure, and elect Ms Božena Jelušić as a member of the Commission for Monitoring and Control of the Privatisation Procedure of the Parliament of Montenegro;- Proposal for the Decision on election of one member of the Committee on European Integration of the Parliament of Montenegro. The Committee decided to propose to the Parliament to elect Ms Suada Zoronjić as the member of the Committee on European Integration of the Parliament of Montenegro;- Proposal for the Decision on election of one member of the Committee on Tourism, Agriculture, Ecology and Spatial Planning of the Parliament of Montenegro. The Committee decided to propose to the Parliament to elect Ms Suada Zoronjić as the member of the Committee on Tourism, Agriculture, Ecology and Spatial Planning. Administrative Committee decided to send an urgent appeal to interested MP groups to submit proposals for candidates for two members of the commission for ranking candidates for a member of the board of the Regulatory Agency for Energy and Regulated Utility Services of Montenegro, with an urgent deadline. Within the item of Current Issues, at the request of a number of non-governmental organisations, and related to the obligation to submit Performance report and financial statements of NGOs for the previous three years, following the publication of the Repeated public Invitation No 00-63-14/20-222 of 17 November 2020, the Committee noted that performance reports and financial statements of NGOs to be considered containing proper documentation were those for the previous three years – 2017, 2018 and 2019, in accordance with item 3 of Article 20 (4) of the Law on Electronic Media.

- At its seventh meeting, held on 28 January, the Administrative Committee established the Proposal for the list for appointment of one member of the Council of the Agency for Electronic Media per authorised proposer - universities of Montenegro. The Committee decided to propose to the Parliament of Montenegro to appoint Mr Branko Bošković, candidate of the University of Donja Gorica, as a member of the Council of the Agency for Electronic Media. The Administrative Committee also decided to extend an invitation to MP groups to submit their proposals for candidates for election of Chairperson, Deputy Chairperson and members of the Committee on Comprehensive Electoral Reform, by 15 February 2021. The Committee adopted a Decision on termination of validity of the Decision on setting the criteria for determining the justified absence of MPs from the Parliament sitting or the Committee meeting. Furthermore, pursuant to Article 32 of the Law on National Public Broadcaster, the Committee specified the Form - Proposal for the appointment of a member of the RTCG Council, and decided to publish it on the website of the Parliament of Montenegro.

NEWS FROM PARLIAMENT



Opinion form published

An Opinion Form of CSOs to submit to parliamentary working bodies is available on the website of the Parliament of Montenegro, in the section Citizens, which seeks to further strengthen the openness and publicity of the Parliament, but also to encourage citizens' interest in its work. In accordance with the Rules of Procedure, representatives of the interested public can participate in meetings of working bodies, upon invitation, or at their request, with the consent of the chairperson of the Committee. They were given the opportunity to submit an opinion to the working body regarding certain issues that are the subject of consideration by the working body. This is one more in a range of activities aimed at contributing to the further improvement and strengthening of cooperation between the Parliament of Montenegro and the civil sector.

An exhibition in recognition of celebrating 150 years of journalism in Montenegro



As of Monday 25 January, on the occasion of Journalists' Day which is marked on 23 January, on the plateau in front of the legislative house, an exhibition was set up to mark a significant jubilee of 150 years of journalism in Montenegro. At the exhibition, which includes more than 40 photographs, there are, in chronological order, the first editions of the following newspapers: Grlica, Crnogorac, Glas Crnogorca, Crnogorka, Zeta, Nova Zeta, Luča, Književni list, Cetinjski vjesnik, and Dan, up to the modern times and the current daily newspapers, with the photographs of the media in the Parliament of Montenegro. The exhibition was implemented with the aid of the Đurđe Crnojević National Library, as well as the rich photography archive of the daily "Pobjeda".

An exhibition on the occasion of International Day of Commemoration in Memory of Victims of Holocaust

President Bečić and the President of the Jewish Community in Montenegro, Nina Ofner Bokan, opened on 27 January the exhibition "Shoah - How Was It Humanly Possible?", on the occasion of International Day of Commemoration in Memory of Victims of Holocaust. Bečić expressed gratitude to representatives of the Jewish Community in Montenegro for cooperation on the project, but also to the overall contribution that this not so numerous, but extremely important population in Montenegro has provided in building our country as a civil society, where all differences have been perceived as its advantage, and their respect as a precondition for our aspiration towards full membership in the European Union. Ofner Bokan thanked the Parliament for its great contribution in marking International Day of Commemoration in memory of the victims of the Holocaust. Montenegro joins almost a hundred countries around the world by marking this important date and the 76th anniversary of Auschwitz liberation, with the goal to remember the victims, but also to prevent any kind of future expression of intolerance or violence.



PARLIAMENTARY GLOSSARY

Calendar of Activities. A Calendar of Activities is a schedule of the work and activities of the parliament and its bodies. In Montenegro the calendar of activities of the Parliament contains the plan of the committee meetings and plenary sittings, as well as marking the dates of important international and inter-parliamentary events.¹

¹ Doc. dr Komar, Olivera, Prof. dr Ivana Jelić, Nataša Komnenić, Irena Mijanović, Jelena Radonjić, Vlatko Šćepanović, Parlamentarni leksikon, Podgorica, Skupština Crne Gore 2016, p 181

IN FOCUS



Winter Session of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe held

Delegation of the Parliament of Montenegro to the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe (PACE) comprised of Maja Vukićević, Head of the Delegation, Dragan Krapović, member of the Delegation and Marko Kovačević and Miloš Konatar, substitute members of the Delegation, took part in the PACE Winter Session, on 25 - 28 January 2021. At the beginning of the session, Rik Daems was re-elected for a second one-year term as President of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe. The Parliamentary Assembly ratified the credentials of the national parliamentary delegations, elected new leadership and ratified the composition of the PACE permanent working bodies. Members of the Parliament of Montenegro were elected as members of the Committee on Political Affairs and Democracy, the Committee on Culture, Science, Education and Media and the Committee on Social Affairs, Health and Sustainable Development. The key topic of the session, which caused particular attention of parliamentarians, dealt with ethical, legal and practical considerations of Covid-19 vaccines. WHO Director-General Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus addressed parliamentarians during this debate, who stressed that equitable access to vaccines was not only a moral imperative but also a precondition for ending the pandemic. He noted with regret that 75% doses of vaccines have been distributed so far only in ten countries worldwide, whereby such approach additionally endangered the poorest and the most vulnerable. The Assembly also dealt with the work of the European Court of Human Rights and implementation of its judgments, considerations in respect of independence of judges in Poland and in the Republic of Moldova, restrictions on NGO activities in Council of Europe member states, activities carried out last year within Assembly's monitoring procedure for 2020 and observation of the PACE observation mission in respect of parliamentary elections in Georgia. Upon the proposal of political groups in the Assembly - Alliance of Liberals and Democrats for Europe (ALDE) and the Socialists, Democrats and Greens Group, special debate was devoted to the arrest and detention of Alexei Navalny in January 2021, while the agenda of the session, upon the European Conservatives Group and Democratic Alliance, covered the topic of freedom of expression under threat by "Big Tech" companies. Secretary General of the Council of Europe Marija Pejčinović-Burić addressed the Parliamentary Assembly, answering parliamentary questions in the follow-up, while the activities of the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe were presented by Chair of the Committee of Ministers Heiko Maas, Federal Minister for Foreign Affairs of Germany. European Commissioner for Justice Didier Reynders was the guest of the Parliamentary Assembly, who in his presentation pointed out that the situation of the rule of law in some member states has raised concerns in recent years. The European Commission is determined to use all the means at its disposal to protect the rule of law as it guarantees the protection of all other values, including democracy and respect for fundamental rights, Reynders said. Ioannis Ktistakis (Greece) was elected judge to the ECHR and Andreas Zünd (Switzerland). Bjørn Berge was elected Deputy Secretary General of the Council of Europe, who served as Director General and Secretary to the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe. Despina Chatzivassiliou-Tsovilis becomes the first woman to hold the post of Secretary General of the Assembly. The next PACE Spring Session will be held in the period 19-23 April 2021, when the Parliamentary Assembly is expected to consider the Draft Resolution on Post-Monitoring Dialogue with Montenegro.

PARLIAMENT OF MONTENEGRO-FROM CATALOGUE OF RECEIVED PRESENTS

Title: Parliament of France in a Box
 Country of origin: France
 Extended by: Patrice Verchère, Philippe Gosselin and Genevieve Gosselin-Fleury
 Recipient: President of the Parliament of Montenegro
 Date of receipt: 16 January 2015



Title: Crystal in a Box
 Country of origin: Croatia
 Extended by: Speaker of the Croatian Parliament Josip Leko
 Recipient: President of the Parliament of Montenegro
 Date of receipt: 23 May 2015



CALENDAR



31 December 2020 - 4 January

- President Bečić paid a visit to Pljevlja, in the period 31 December 2020 - 4 January 2021, on which occasion he met with Director of the General Hospital in Pljevlja Erduan Lalović, President of the Pljevlja Local Assembly Dragiša Sokić, heads of councillors' groups, president of the Municipality Igor Golubović, and entrepreneurs from Pljevlja. Bečić started his working visit to Pljevlja by visiting General Hospital in Pljevlja, when he handed over a donation of EUR 5000 by the Parliament of Montenegro to Erduan Lalović, Hospital Director, with the aim of fighting coronavirus. He voiced expectation that the allocated funds would contribute to improving working conditions in this health institution. Lalović stressed the several-decades problems of the Pljevlja municipality related to bad infrastructural conditions and the lack of relevant medical staff. The meeting was attended by Jelena Borovinić-Bojović, Minister of Health, Veljo Čađenović, State Secretary at the Ministry of Health, and Mirha Hasanbegović, internist at the General Hospital. During the visit to President of the Pljevlja Local Assembly Sokić, Bečić got acquainted with the operations of the Pljevlja Local Assembly as well as about the future planned activities. Heads of councillors' groups expressed their views of the current political developments in Pljevlja and the challenges they have been facing as citizens of this municipality. During his meeting with the President of the Pljevlja Municipality Igor Golubović, Bečić pointed to the necessity of resolving the serious ecologic problems and referred to numerous developmental potentials in agriculture, wood processing industry, new tourist values and other economy sectors. At the meeting with the Pljevlja entrepreneurs, Bečić emphasised the importance of cooperation among all institutions with the aim of creating better environment for doing business, particularly during coronavirus pandemic.



3 January

- President of the Parliament of Montenegro Aleksa Bečić and Prime Minister of Montenegro Zdravko Krivokapić met in the Parliament of Montenegro in order to discuss the current political situation. The interlocutors agreed that the Parliament of Montenegro, with a timely reaction, prevented the illegal attempt of the State Election Commission to alter the electoral will of the citizens, block the institutions of the system and prevent the constitutional functioning of the Parliament of Montenegro. Thereby, the highest legislative authority of the state protected both the Constitution of Montenegro and its constitutional position. They stated that all artificially created tensions and obstructions by the opposition should be resolved in a peaceful, democratic and constitutional manner, as befits serious and responsible people. The two presidents particularly stressed the importance of a decisive institutional response to any attempt to usurp competencies or exploit state bodies.

7 January

- President Bečić attended Christmas Liturgy in the Church Cathedral of the Resurrection of Christ in Podgorica. In his congratulatory message, President Bečić stressed that symbolism of one of the greatest Christmas holiday brings even more forms of togetherness: *“unity in expecting the better day which is supposed to come and in expecting the better version of ourselves that the holiday itself will make us; unity in the joy for the holiday that celebrates the birth; and unity in sadness and feeling of emptiness because, due to the circumstances that we majorly were not able to influence, we will not spend it with those with whom we traditionally celebrate”*.

11 January

- President Bečić visited Bar municipality and on that occasion met representatives of three religious communities. In separate meetings, the President of the Parliament spoke with archpriest-stavrophore Slobodan Zeković and clergy, Mons. Rrok Gjonlleshaj, Archbishop of Bar, as well as with chief imam of Selimiye Mosque Mujdin effendi Milaimi and Nedžib Ibrišimović, President of the Islamic Community Board in Bar. Bečić assessed that Bar has always been recognised as an environment that best witnessed the sustainability and necessity of multi-confessional and multi - ethnic harmony and coexistence, as the strongest foundations of civil Montenegro. Representatives of all three religious

CALENDAR



communities were united in the assessment that their mutual cooperation and respect was the best example of multi-confessional harmony of Montenegrin society.



13 January

- President Bečić visited the municipality of Herceg Novi, on which occasion he met with Municipality President Stevan Katić, vice-presidents Vesna Samardžić and Miloš Konjević, Local Assembly President Nikola Samardžić, as well as with the Chief Administrator Nenad Đorđević. Bečić especially referred to numerous projects of local administration, whose implementation for the most part was not hindered even in the difficult circumstances due to the coronavirus pandemic, with special emphasis on the Daycare Centre building, the adventure park which was the source of pride for Montenegro and the region, as well as the opening of the first municipality-owned hotel. Katić emphasised that they should work together on improving current legal solutions. During his meeting with heads of councillors' groups, Bečić had the opportunity to learn about the work of the local parliament and the recently adopted decisions.

14-15 January

- President Bečić paid an official visit to Berane municipality. On this occasion, Bečić visited General Hospital in Berane, when he presented to its Director Budimir Dabetić a donation of EUR 5000 by the Parliament of Montenegro. President Bečić expressed the readiness of the Parliament to work together with the Government of Montenegro and the relevant ministry to improve the material position and working conditions of all employees in the healthcare system of Montenegro. In addition, within his first working visit to Berane President Bečić has met with Mayor Dragoslav Ščekić, President of the Local Assembly Novica Obradović and heads of councillors groups in the Local Assembly. Bečić pointed out, inter alia, the significance of

proactive action of the Government of Montenegro and Berane Municipality on reviewing bad concession contracts, abolishing import lobbies, protecting domestic producers and preserving the environment.

15 January

- President of Montenegro Milo Đukanović, President of the Parliament Aleksa Bečić, Prime Minister Zdravko Krivokapić and Deputy Prime Minister Dritan Abazović talked in the meeting, initiated by Prime Minister Krivokapić, about the issues of national importance for the both government and opposition and all Montenegrin citizens. The issues concerning the functionality of the state, institutions and their further development, were considered. The interlocutors expressed readiness for the interest to be followed as a common national interest and improve common responsibility regarding the need for the further development of Montenegro as a European society, with good quality of living standard and freedom of every man. They also talked about the issues that caused misunderstanding during the first stages of the cohabitation and expressed conviction that greater initiatives for



cooperation and constructiveness in dialogue would improve and create conditions for having cohabitation model, which would result in more efficient and more operational model and contribute to better reputation of Montenegro and its democracy in international community.

16 January

- President Bečić met with representatives of the Association of Montenegrin Banks Bratislav Pejaković and Mladen Rabrenović. President Bečić welcomed the initiative of interlocutors to consider the recently adopted legal solutions in an open dialogue, especially those relating to the banking sector. The Representatives of the Association of Montenegrin Banks informed Bečić about the current

CALENDAR



situation with regard to the adoption and re-voting on the Law on Amendments to the Law on Credit Institutions and the Law on Amendments to the Law on Recovery and Resolution of Credit Institutions. They jointly voiced the expectation that the new situation with would soon be resolved, in order to overcome problems in this sector; in the interest of the system and society as a whole.

- President of the Parliament of Montenegro Aleksa Bečić toured Đurđevi Stupovi Monastery when he met His Eminence Bishop of Budimlje and Nikšić Joanikije. Thanking for the opportunity to learn about the long history and importance of Đurđevi Stupovi Monastery, Bečić referred to the importance of reconciliation and long-term peace as a precondition for further progress. His Eminence Bishop of Budimlje and Nikšić Joanikije thanked President Bečić for his visit, and pointed out the significance of continued dialogue between representatives of churches and religious communities and top state officials.

19 January

- President of the Parliament of Montenegro Aleksa Bečić held an online meeting with Igor Zorčič, President of the National Assembly of the Republic of Slovenia. They discussed the overall bilateral relations, including the plans for more agile continuation of Montenegro's integration into the European Union and strengthening of the alliance within NATO. He expressed expectation that Slovenia would continue to provide support to Montenegro in the further process of European integration and that the enlargement policy would be one of priorities during the Slovenian presidency of the European Union. Zorčič said that the two countries had no open issues and that the Western Balkans would be among the priorities of the future presidency. They concluded that there was room for the improvement of inter-state cooperation of two friendly states in a number of fields. The meeting posed an opportunity for President Bečić to thank for the support that the Republic of Slovenia has provided to Montenegro during the coronavirus pandemic.
- President Bečić met Charge d'affaires at the Embassy of Ukraine Natalia Fialka. Noting that the two friendly states had numerous possibilities for deepening cooperation, Bečić referred to the previous successful bilateral communication and expressed pleasure at the fact that the two countries had no open issues. They shared opinions on the current political developments in Montenegro and Ukraine, with assessment that our country would continue to provide support to Ukraine on its European and Euro-Atlantic path. Fialka emphasised that the Ukrainian part was very interested in

intensifying relations with Montenegro and voiced expectation that they would jointly contribute to the strengthening of cooperation between parliaments, where a special role would be played by a future friendship group of the Parliament of Montenegro and the Ukrainian Parliament.

20 January

- Chair of the Committee on International Relations and Emigrants, Miodrag Lekić, met with the Ambassador of Bosnia and Herzegovina to Montenegro, H.E. Branimir Jukić. They stated that both countries were characterised by friendly relations, with no open issues, and that they have been marked by a relationship of mutual respect. The importance of continued cooperation and mutual support in the circumstances of facing a global challenge such as the coronavirus pandemic has been emphasised at the meeting. Jukić pointed out that the strengthening of contractual relations is to continue in the period ahead, and expected to be followed by the signing of new bilateral agreements between the two governments. They jointly stated it was necessary to work on further improvement of inter-parliamentary cooperation, especially through the intensification of communication at the level of parliamentary working bodies as well as friendship groups.



foto: Igor Šljivčanin

- An Opinion Form of CSOs to submit to parliamentary working bodies is available on the website of the Parliament of Montenegro, in the section Citizens.
- Chair of the Committee on Human Rights and Freedoms Jovan Jole Vučurović met online with representatives of the Westminster Foundation for Democracy (WFD) Ivan Radojević and Nevenka Stanković. The Committee Secretary informed Chair Vučurović of the previously conducted activities, and the WFD's three-year project "Creation of the Human Rights Network in the Western Balkan". Radojević voiced the WFD's readiness to assist the Committee in its

CALENDAR



field work visits, meetings, bilateral and multilateral exchange of experience and engaging of experts for specific workshops, in line with the priorities. Vučurović supported the initiative and voiced his expectation that their successful cooperation would be continued.

21 January

- Chair of the Security and Defence Committee Milan Knežević met the representatives of the Trade Union of Defence and Army of Montenegro. During the meeting, among other things, they discussed discrimination against members of the Ministry of Defence and the Army of Montenegro on religious, national, political and trade union grounds. Knežević expressed awareness of the mentioned issues and full support and readiness to overcome the subject matter.



- President of the Parliament of Montenegro Aleksa Bečić today met H.E. Ambassador of the United Arab Emirates to Montenegro H.E. Ms Nabila Alshamsi. Informing the Ambassador on the current political developments in Montenegro, President Bečić expressed expectation that numerous economic topics of mutual interest would be a precondition for the further strengthening of bilateral relations. The interlocutors jointly noted that the two states remained devoted to improving relations, with mutual assessment that parliamentary cooperation could significantly contribute to the strengthening of political, economic and social ties.
- President Bečić spoke by phone with President of the Grand National Assembly of Turkey Mustafa Şentop. The interlocutors noted excellent bilateral relations emphasising strong parliamentary cooperation. President Bečić thanked for the significant help that Turkey has sent to Montenegro for tackling coronavirus, stressing the importance of continued cooperation in the complex time of the pandemic.
- Chair of the Committee on International Relations and

Emigrants Miodrag Lekić met with Ambassador of the Republic of Armenia to Montenegro H.E. Ashot Hovakimian. They jointly noted that there was a great potential for further development of relations of the two states, and that cultural and historic ties should also be followed by the strengthening of cooperation in the political and economic area. Hovakimian reminded that the cities of Titograd and Yerevan established close relations through a cooperation agreement back in 1974, and expressed interest in rekindling the relations between the capitals of the two countries. Lekić pointed out that one of the Committee's first steps aimed at strengthening ties would be to initiate the forming of a parliamentary friendship group with this country, as well as to establish close cooperation with the Foreign Affairs Committee of the Armenian Parliament.

- President of the Parliament of Montenegro Aleksa Bečić met Ambassador of the Republic of Armenia to Montenegro Ashot Hovakimian. President Bečić voiced readiness for further improvement of bilateral relations by intensifying political dialogue at the highest level and expressed expectation that jointly they would contribute to establishing parliamentary diplomacy. Hovakimian informed Bečić about the current political developments in Armenia and conflicts in respect of Nagorno-Karabakh, expressing hope that final resolution of the conflict would be reached within the format of the Co-Chairs of the OSCE Minsk Group. He voiced expectation that the two countries would continue to build good relations within joint multilateral mechanisms.

- Chair of the Committee on International Relations and Emigrants Miodrag Lekić met Ambassador of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland to Montenegro H.E. Karen Maddocks. Lekić emphasised that this country represented a kind of a role model for Montenegro when it comes to democratic standards and the rule of law. Maddocks voiced her expectation that, during his term, he would contribute to the strengthening of parliamentary cooperation of the two countries that the top priority of the UK's diplomatic missions in the Western Balkans region was to keep peace and stability. Lekić pointed out that Brexit would certainly not reduce the intensity of relations between Montenegro and the United Kingdom, but, on the contrary, it would give a new tone to the development of partnership.

22 January

- President Bečić hosted the Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of North Macedonia, Bujar Osmani, who has been paying an official visit to Podgorica. Bearing in mind the closeness of two countries, as well as the fact that

strengthening regional cooperation has been one of the key foreign policy priorities of Montenegro, the President of the Parliament expressed strong support for the European aspiration of North Macedonia, ready and open to help achieve objectives of the European agenda. Osmani thanked Montenegro for its support for North Macedonia's membership to NATO, adding that being part of the North Atlantic Alliance contributed to political and economic predictability, as well as greater stability and security of our region. He also shared positive expectations regarding the start of negotiations with the European Union.

- Chair of the Security and Defence Committee Milan Knežević, met with the Ambassador of the Republic of Armenia to Montenegro, H.E. Ashot Hovakimian. Hovakimian informed his interlocutor about the current situation in the Republic of Armenia with a special focus on the security and geopolitical context. Referring to the complexity of the moment from the geopolitical point of view in the context of recent events in the Nagorno-Karabakh region, Chairperson Knežević welcomed the termination of conflict and expressed hope that a sustainable solution would be reached in a peaceful and diplomatic manner. They jointly pointed to the importance of improving cooperation between the two friendly countries.
- Members of the Gender Equality Committee most severely condemn the unseemly attack on Minister Vesna Bratić and ask the responsible authorities to do everything in their power so that the perpetrators can be adequately punished as soon as possible. The sexist posts at the expense of Minister Bratić have clearly demonstrated how far the obstacles to women's engagement in politics reach, the obstacles which are directly related to power, domination and control within the patriarchy, as a key producer of cultural and structural violence against women. It is obvious that Montenegro failed to achieve the desired inclusivity in the gender equality domain. This is also proven by the fact that, following the last elections, the participation of women in the Parliament also decreased. That is why what is needed are strong institutional and civil initiatives, female and male solidarity, in order to create a normal and peaceful society that guarantees equal human rights and prohibition of discrimination on any grounds.

23 January

- As of Monday 25 January, on the occasion of Journalists' Day which is marked on 23 January, on the plateau in front of the Parliament house, an exhibition was set up to mark the jubilee of 150 years of journalism in Montenegro.

25 January

- President Bečić held an online lecture to students of the Faculty of Political Sciences, within the marking of International Day of Education. He voiced his expectation that young people would be the greatest generator of change in

Montenegro, and that he believed that they could contribute to overcoming divisions. The students showed special interest in Montenegro's EU accession process, impact of polarisation of Montenegrin society on young people's political preferences, as well as when could students expect to return to the regular manner of studying that had been drastically changed due to the coronavirus pandemic.

- Vice-President of the Parliament of Montenegro, Branka Bošnjak, met with the Director of the Women's Rights Centre, Maja Raičević. The subject of conversation was the initiative of the Vice-President Bošnjak for the formation of the Women's Group in the Parliament of Montenegro, which was received well and an opportunity to intensify cooperation, especially when it came to improving regulations for combating gender-based violence, establishing the Alimony Fund as priority activities. Raičević welcomed the amendments to the Rules of Procedure of the Parliament of Montenegro in terms of greater visibility of women in leadership positions in the Parliament. They discussed the consequences of the coronavirus epidemic, which led to the increase in violence against women in conditions of restrictions on leaving home and movement, as the surroundings that involved risk, as well as to the consequences on work and employment, and the fact that about six thousand women had lost their jobs since the beginning of the pandemic.



Foto: Igor Šljivčanin

25-28 January

- Delegation of the Parliament of Montenegro to the PACE composed of: Maja Vukićević, Head of the Delegation, Dragan Krapović, member of the Delegation and Marko Kovačević and Miloš Konatar, substitute members of the Delegation, took part in the Winter Session of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe, via video-conference system.

26 January

- President Bečić met Ombudsman Siniša Bjeković. Bečić expressed conviction that the transparent work of the Ombudsman Office will contribute to building the rule of law, protecting freedoms and rights and citizens, as well as legal and unbiased work of all state bodies. They discussed numerous topical issues of the social life of Montenegro, with special reference to considerations regarding the

environmental protection, improvement of human rights and freedoms and general upholding to the laws and international conventions.

- President Bečić met with representatives of the Association of Pop Artists of Montenegro Danijel Alibabić, Renata Perazić and Mihajlo Miho Radonjić. Complex economic and social situation resulting from the Covid-19 pandemic was a direct cause for the meeting. Bečić voiced his readiness and openness to find the best solution in an open dialogue with the representatives of the Government of Montenegro in



order to overcome this situation. Minister of Health Jelena Borovinić-Bojović and Minister of Economic Development Jakov Milatović also attended.

27 January

- President of the Parliament of Montenegro Aleksa Bečić met newly-appointed United Nations Resident Coordinator in Montenegro Peter Lundberg. President Bečić expressed pleasure at the many-year long cooperation between the Parliament of Montenegro and UN system and commitment to UN core values, and reminded that he will be working on returning child benefit, and that this issue should be systematically arranged, along with the provision of free textbooks for all primary school students. Lundberg thanked the President for his readiness to improve cooperation with the UN system in the country, expressing expectation that the Parliament would continue and additionally strengthen support to implementing Agenda 2030.



- Chair of the Committee on Human Rights and Freedoms Jovan Jole Vučurović and Chair of the Gender Equality Committee took part in an event on “Raising our voices for those that cannot - justice for victims of sexual violence”, organised by NGOs LGBT Forum Progress and LGBTIQ social centre. Vučurović said that the Committee on Human Rights and Freedoms has been continuously and for a long time engaged in affirmation, promotion of rights and protection of women and children. Chair Vučurović said that in 2018, when considering the Concluding observations on the combined second and third periodic reports of Montenegro adopted by the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child on the application of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, the Committee found that the responsible institutions should organise additional activities aimed the implementation of priority recommendations. Chair Jelušić concluded that the Proposal for Initiative to amend the Criminal Code of Montenegro is of first-class social interest and hopes that the increase in penalties will contribute to the discouragement of perpetrators and the overall reduction of cases of violence.



- President Bečić met President of the Jewish Community in Montenegro Nina Ofner-Bokan, wherein he stressed the importance of the very existence of the Jewish Community in Montenegro, as a confirmation of multi-religious and multi-ethnic harmony of Montenegro. Bečić and Ofner-Bokan opened the exhibition "Shoah - How Was It Humanly Possible?", on the occasion of International Day of Commemoration in Memory of Victims of Holocaust.

28 January

- President Bečić met representatives of the Albanian National Council Faik Nik, President of the Council, Lindon Gjellaj, Secretary of the Council; and MP Genci Nimanbegu. In the meeting, hosted on the occasion of presenting standards of the coat of arms and flag, as well as musical notation of the anthem of the Albanian people in Montenegro, Bečić stressed that all participants of the political life should give contribution to creating conditions where representatives of minority nations would exercise their rights. He praised active participation of the Albanian National Council, assessing that it contributed to building multinational and multi-religious harmony. Informing the President of the

CALENDAR



Parliament with challenges in the work of the Council, they stressed that the presentation of the Albanian people symbols in Montenegro was particularly important for all of them, representing another example of richness of multiethnicity.

- Chair of the Committee on International Relations and Emigrants Miodrag Lekić met with Ambassador of the Republic of Albania to Montenegro H.E. Ridi Kurtezi. They jointly assessed that traditionally good relations represented an example of good cooperation in the region. Lekić reminded of the frequent and good quality cooperation with the Foreign Affairs Committee of the Albanian Parliament, voicing his interest for the regular communication to be continued. Kurtezi referred to the common foreign policy goals, among which were European integration and development of cooperation within NATO, as well as improvement of regional cooperation and voiced his satisfaction with the fact that Montenegro was a leader in the EU accession process.
- Staff of the Parliament of Montenegro took part in the training course on “Diplomatic Protocol” organised online in cooperation with Europrotocol and delivered by Europrotocol Director Duša Adamić-Vidanović. The training was primarily intended for the staff of the Protocol Department, but also for the representatives of other organisation units whose work, among other things, implies international communication, diplomatic skills and protocol activities. The participants had an opportunity through lessons, simulations and practical examples, to learn about importance of protocol in the international scene, rules and trends of modern protocol.
- President Bečić met with representatives of the Serb National Council, Momčilo Vuksanović, the President and Novica Đurić, member of the Council. He assessed that all diversities, with mutual respect and understanding, lead to the improvement of the concept of civil society, and represented not our weaknesses, but the advantages and fortune to be nurtured and combined into a single team. Representatives of the Council informed Bečić about the problems they have faced in their work, functioning and activities, with special reference to the opinion of the public administration about this organisation.

29 January

- President Bečić met with the former workers of the Ulcinj Solana "Bajo Sekulić" Veselin Saša Mitrović and Dragiša Rosandić. Bečić said he understood the complex situation the

former workers of the Ulcinj Salina found themselves emphasised he shared a special sensibility for the demands of workers, taking into account the fact that the Ulcinj Salina was one of the oldest companies in Montenegro. Representatives of workers expected the new parliamentary majority, at the level of competent parliamentary working bodies, would consider the process of privatisation of this company.

- President Bečić met with representatives of the Union of Free Trade Unions Srđa Keković, Vukašin Zogović, Željko Burić, and Ivana Mihajlović. They exchanged opinions on the complex economic situation caused by the coronavirus, noting the necessity of strengthening social dialogue aimed at improving current difficult working conditions for employees. Bečić stressed that in the focus of his endeavours would be systemic regulation of the issue of minimal wage, child benefit, as well as free textbooks for all elementary school pupils in Montenegro.
- Vice-President of the Parliament of Montenegro Branka Bošnjak met representatives of the Students' Parliament of University of Montenegro Saša Roćen, Andrej Vukčević, Aleksandar Šipčić, Milena Šekularac and Stefan Mikić, concerning the Proposal for the Law on Amendments to the Law on Higher Education. Bošnjak informed the representatives of the Students' Parliament of University of Montenegro about the proposal for opening public discussion on modifying the entire Law on Higher Education and the initiative she would send to all student units to send their comments and proposals for amending and modifying the law. Representatives of the SPUCG informed Bošnjak about their proposals for amending the law in the part related to the election of rector and participation of students



in that process, as well as on the need to find urgent solution for the students in Bologna education system to be able to enrol on specialist studies even without completed bachelor studies, and thus stop the transfer of students from state-owned to private universities.