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Prime Minister of Montenegro

***Address at the Opening of the Conference „Role of
National Science Academies in the 21st Century”***

Ladies and Gentlemen, Distinguished Academicians, Distinguished Members of the Diplomatic Corps,

It is an honour and pleasure to address the Conference on the „Role of National Science Academies in the 21st Century”. Montenegro very much needs conferences like this one, as it is on knowledge that we base our entire development. I am particularly pleased the Conference has gathered eminent guests from many European countries and that is being organized by the Montenegrin Academy of Sciences and Arts. This is yet another demonstration that MASA is a valuable member of the European family of national academies, ready to make its contribution to building the economy and the society at large as truly knowledge-based. This, indeed, is the imperative of the present time, the precondition to meeting global challenges such as growing competitiveness, energy security, environment, equitable society. The goal is clear: create all the prerequisites for a good quality life for our citizens. This, in the first place, calls for further, intensive investment in education, research and innovation. Likewise, this requires promoting collaboration between the economy, the academy and the Government. In essence, creating all the key prerequisites for achievement of goals defined by the EU Lisbon Strategy.

Over the past years, and in particular since becoming independent in 2006, Montenegro has experienced a dynamic economic growth, along with constant advancement of democratic freedoms and harmonization of our legal system with the European legislation and best practices. We have overcome all the major ailments of the recent past – the unemployment rate has fall-

en sharply and in terms of foreign investment we are the leader in the region. In short, all the prerequisites are in place for accelerated and comprehensive development of the country. We are, however, conscious that all the results achieved cannot fully bear fruit unless our endeavours bring about a knowledge-based society, which we see as the main tool of further progress. Therefore Montenegro aspires to join the global research and technological processes, and not only because it is in our best interest to actively follow the dynamic processes that are underway in this sphere, but primarily because we are conscious that investment in education and science means, at the same time, creating the greatest asset a state may have. Last January Montenegro has gained an associate status in the EU Seventh Framework Programme for Research and Technological Development. This is yet another crucial step forward in Montenegro's integration in the European Research Area and EU in general. This also proves that the Government is aware of the importance of education, innovation, research and technological development in building a knowledge-based society.

The role of national academies in the new age is also, in my view, one of a potential source of development momentum in various spheres of human activity. Specific scientific projects, on top of their practical applications and impact, are invaluable to any serious strategic policy or society deliberations. The function of science and of its critical discourse is to take a comprehensive view of the development opportunities of the community in which it operates.

Expectations from science academies are manifold, as indicated by the titles of the Conference sessions. The integrity of a society largely depends on its intellectual capacity. We are therefore particularly sensitive to the activities of the scientific community. The advisory role of science academies as independent institutions can be of great import to governments in addressing development issues.

The demanding and inspiring topic that has brought you together here in Podgorica clearly highlights your responsibility for social, economic, cultural and other processes. I am convinced that without good quality cooperation with the academic and scientific community no serious political elite can count on being successful. It is therefore the obligation of the state to keep enhancing the conditions for the work of the national academy, encourage the research spirit and create an appropriate environment for realization of numerous initiatives and strategically important projects. The science commu-

nity is on the other hand obligated to design projects conducive to long-term development, creating a research and cultural environment.

I will recall that many important scientists and scholars from Montenegro developed spiritually in other communities, actively participating in their advancement. Today's gathering is the best occasion to say that we need to pull together all the creative potential to further Montenegro's prosperity and her certain European future. Towards a better, more equitable and more affluent society we need to pull together our brains. Since only by commitment to building the community in which we live can we be of use to global processes.

Montenegro aspires to have in place such a higher education and science policy that will meet the highly demanding needs of the modern society. In this regard, we are conscious that our investment in research and development must continuously spur these aspirations. It is a development requirement, as well as the interest of Montenegro to join the company of countries that participate in major projects of the world science community.

New challenges that the 21st century is bringing call for a stronger ability to master global knowledge and technological advancements as sources of enhanced competitiveness of the society. Knowledge is among the key factors boosting competitiveness of the economy, and boosting investment in knowledge is the most profitable investment. For the new development age that lies ahead we need new human resource profile, whose knowledge and skills must meet the highest European standards.

In addition to this, on the road towards the European Union, the Government of Montenegro is working hard to create a propitious environment for various scientific and education processes. To this end, we have adopted a series of key strategic documents articulating precisely our goals to build the society and all its segments as knowledge-based. The Montenegrin Academy of Sciences and Arts has a special responsibility in this sphere. In this regard, collaboration with its counterparts in the region and beyond is very important.

The importance scientific research is for us beyond dispute, as we know that science and development go always hand in hand. In the process of harmonization with European research practice, we have set out to adopt a series of strategic documents, among which I would on this occasion single out the Research Development Strategy, which relies on European research policies. In addition to setting clear research priorities, the Strategy also spells out meas-

ures that will significantly increase investment in research and spur stronger involvement of research institution in addressing the most momentous development issues and improving our economic competitiveness. It also specifies measures for encouraging young people to go into research. The great creative potential that Montenegro has obligates us to build this country with knowledge as her hallmark.

It was here on the soil of free Montenegro, that *Octoechos*, the first book among the South Slavs, was printed at the time of the Columbus discovery. Our history was made by sword, as well as pen, the most illustrative example being that of Petar II Petrović Njegoš, who simultaneously waged the battles for freedom and for a place among the enlightened peoples of Europe. Therefore, today we have no dilemma, either: Montenegro must join those countries that base their prosperity on mastering state-of-the-art research and technology.

I am convinced that the Conference on the Role of National Science Academies in the 21st Century will bring about concrete contribution towards achievement of our common European goals and I wish you successful and fruitful proceedings.

Thank you for your attention.