NGO Roundtable

20 April 2001

This U.S.-Montenegrin Policy Forum meeting was focused on NGOs in order to create a lasting network of individuals and organizations committed to enhancing U.S.-Montenegrin relations. It gathered representatives from the International Republican Institute, the Democratization Policy Institute, the Aspen Institute, the U.S. Agency for International Development, the Public International Law and Policy Group, Search for Common Ground, National Endowment for Democracy, the Institute for Democracy in Eastern Europe, and the Center for International Private Enterprise.

Summary

The U.S. government does not appear to be as engaged in Montenegro as it could be. Non-engagement or lessened involvement at a time when an aspiring state is taking shape is both shortsighted and counter-productive. NGOs can play an important role in promoting pluralism, multi-ethnicity, rule of law, and a market economy in Montenegro, all of which are to contribute to the republic's international integration. The mere fact that Montenegrin society has not been divided or decimated by war and ethnic conflict in the last ten years should give an impetus and provide a basis for future development and NGO inputs. The objective of the meeting was to determine what NGOs could contribute to Montenegro in order to help develop a multi-ethnic democratic state based on the rule of law regardless of its international status and of official international policy toward the republic at any particular time. Subsequent meetings of the group are being planned.

Recommendations

- The key areas for the future NGO involvement in Montenegro include public administration, the educational system, the media, the development of local NGOs, inter-ethnic and inter-regional programs, anti-crime and anti-corruption initiatives, and law enforcement.
- Western governments and NGOs should be intensifying their involvement in helping to construct a democratic state and a civic society regardless of the future of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia.