

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

March 22, 2012

His Excellency Igor Lukšić
Prime Minister
Podgorica, Republic of Montenegro

Dear Prime Minister Lukšić:

We write as strong supporters of the U.S.-Montenegrin relationship and friends of the people of Montenegro. Montenegro has only been an independent, sovereign state for five years, but in that time your country has advanced markedly, achieving candidate status with the European Union and hopefully joining NATO later this year.

We would like to raise an issue of importance to Montenegro's ethnic Albanian minority. Between Podgorica and Montenegro's border with Kosova a sizable Albanian population lives in the Tuzi (Malësia) area. For several years, the local population of the Tuzi region had desired greater local control and requested to be designated a separate municipality. The ethnic Albanian population of this region had hoped that, under European standards for establishing municipalities, Tuzi could be separated from Podgorica and power could be devolved to the local community, similar to how municipalities have been created for ethnic Serbian communities in Kosova. A compromise measure, the Capital City Law, was passed designating Tuzi as a "City District," within which the local citizens would be given some autonomy and several organs of local democracy, including a mayor and local assembly. The community was told at the time that this arrangement was not necessarily permanent, but could be changed if people felt it was not adequate.

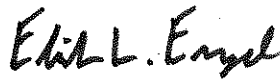
We have now heard from the residents of the Tuzi region that they believe that the provisions of the Capital City law did not give Tuzi sufficient local control and that an official municipality should be established. However, we understand that in November 2011 the Montenegrin parliament passed the Law on Territorial Organization, but did not establish the Tuzi municipality.

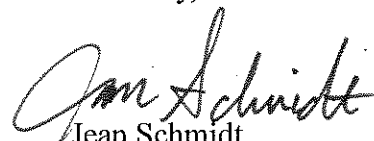
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We, therefore, would respectfully request that Montenegro follow the wishes of the local citizens and revisit the issue of establishing a Tuzi municipality with a goal of formally setting up a municipality before the end of 2012. Further, we believe that as Montenegro moves to open negotiations with the EU on accession, establishment of a municipality in Tuzi could underscore Montenegro's commitment to consolidating its multi-ethnic democracy with full protections of the rights of its minorities.

We greatly appreciate your consideration of our views and look forward to opening a dialogue with your government on this issue in the coming days.

Sincerely,


Eliot L. Engel
Member of Congress


Jean Schmidt
Member of Congress


Gary C. Peters
Member of Congress