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## **Montenegro: Mgr Gallagher (Holy see) meets national authorities in Podgorica. Mass with Catholic community on the weekend**

The visit to Montenegro of the Vatican Secretary for Relations with States, Mgr Paul Richard Gallagher, began yesterday with a first meeting in Podgorica with Foreign Minister Filip Ivanovic. The latter stressed the commitment of the Balkan country, as a multi-ethnic and multi-confessional state, to safeguarding all religious communities. Mr Ivanovic expressed Podgorica's respect for the constructive role of the Holy See in resolving several political, economic, and social issues globally. Mr Ivanovic recalled that the first Concordat between Montenegro and the Holy See was signed in 1886. He spoke about the Basic Agreement with the Holy See signed in 2011 and the establishment of the Joint Commission for the implementation of this agreement: the sixth session held in the morning was chaired by Mgr Gallagher. For his part, the Vatican Secretary said "the visit is a confirmation of the ties, cooperation and friendship that exist between the two States and it is the intention of the Holy See to further develop these relations in areas of common interest". In his view, "the work of the Joint Commission further confirms that Montenegro respects all religious communities and full freedom of worship, in accordance with the principles of the rule of law". Mgr Gallagher added that the Holy see supports Montenegro in its efforts to become a member of the EU. Mgr Gallagher and Minister Ivanovic exchanged views "on the ongoing global crises and the importance of working together to boost solidarity, dialogue, and the protection of respect for human rights". Today, Mgr Gallagher will meet the President of the Parliament Mr Andrija Mandic and Prime Minister Milojko Spajic. Tomorrow in Kotor, which is home to the Catholic community of Croatian origin, the Vatican Secretary will preside over a Mass in the Cathedral of Saint Tryphon, while on Sunday, he will travel to Bar, where the Albanian-speaking Catholic community is located, for a Mass at the Co-Cathedral of Saint Peter.

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