



Statement by First Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs Ivica Dacic at the Ministerial Meeting of the Non-Aligned Movement in Baku (Azerbaijan) :

"Mr. Chairman,
Distinguished Excellencies,
Dear friends,

I am honored and pleased to attend today's meeting in Baku following our long-standing tradition to continually participate in the meetings of the Non-Aligned Movement. At the outset, I would like to express gratitude to friendly Azerbaijan for the warm hospitality extended to us and for an excellent organization of this meeting.

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Serbia attaches great importance to, and highly appreciates, its cooperation with the Non-Aligned Movement. We are proud of our historical friendly ties with NAM member states and would like to continue to deepen and step up political, economic, cultural and educational cooperation as well as the common efforts made in support of multilateralism and the international order based on the respect of international law. I would like to recall that the former Yugoslavia was one of the founding members of the Non-Aligned Movement and that the First Conference of the Non-Aligned Countries was held in Belgrade in 1961.

We express our full support to the respect of the principle of sovereignty and political independence as a foundation on which international peace and security should be based and friendly relations and cooperation among States need to be fostered. We believe that the world based on the rule of law and the respect for human rights and dignity of each and every individual, be it man, woman or child, regardless of their origin, religion, ethnic or any other affiliation, provide the only sound basis for peace and sustainable development.

Unfortunately, Serbia has felt first-hand the consequences of failure to honor international law, territorial integrity and sovereignty. It experienced a foreign military aggression on its own territory, persecution and expulsion of its own population and destruction of centuries-old cultural and religious heritage sites, attempted secessionism and ever more pronounced

territorial aspirations by a neighboring state against the Serbian province of Kosovo and Metohija.

In line with the legally binding UN SCR 1244 (1999), adopted under Chapter VII of the Charter of the United Nations, Kosovo and Metohija is an autonomous province within the Republic of Serbia, under UN interim administration in Kosovo – UNMIK for short. By defending its own sovereignty and territorial integrity, Serbia is at the same time defending international law, UN Charter and the supreme authority of the Security Council in the maintenance of international peace and security. Our country is confident that an engagement in the protection of its national and historical identity is fully justified.

Reaching a political solution to the issue of Kosovo and Metohija is the Republic of Serbia's national priority. We consider that a lasting and sustainable solution can be found only through dialogue and compromise as well as by honoring and implementing the agreements reached. Serbia is strongly opposed to any attempt of imposing unilateral, illegal acts because they do not contribute either to creating an atmosphere that may encourage the resumption of dialogue which is currently stalled. We are convinced that in order to restore dialogue and in the interest of stability of the entire region, it is necessary to avoid harmful initiatives such as the so-called Kosovo bids to join international organizations.

Let me remind you that the Provisional Institutions of Self-Government in Pristina, only two months after their bid for admission to membership of Interpol was rejected in Dubai last November by an overwhelming majority of states that clearly stood up to politicization and abuse of international organizations, this year again resubmitted their application in January. Now, nine months after they renewed their bid, before the very start of this year's Interpol General Assembly recently held in Chile they decided to withdraw their application, realizing that this time again their bid would be rejected even by a larger number of states.

Despite unilateral acts of Pristina, Serbia remains committed to finding a compromise solution to the status of Kosovo and Metohija, one that would ensure lasting peace and security. Our side has on a number of occasions demonstrated its readiness to reach such a solution.

I wish to take this opportunity to renew the expressions of gratitude to all the states which do not recognize the unilaterally declared independence of so-called "Kosovo" while selflessly supporting our efforts to preserve the territorial integrity of the Republic of Serbia. I would like to underline that over the past two years alone, appreciating the arguments put forward by Serbia, a total of 15 states have de-recognized the Kosovo UDI, which is a step that we highly value. I also call on all those who did recognize the Kosovo UDI to re-examine thoroughly their decision and far-reaching consequences of such a precedent not only for Serbia and the Balkans, but for other countries and regions worldwide, and to revoke their recognition and give a chance to dialogue towards a solution to be reached in the framework of international law, in line with United Nations Security Council Resolution 1244, all with the aim of ensuring a lasting and sustainable peace and stability and progress for all.

Dear friends,

The modern world is facing transnational challenges too large for any country, including the biggest ones, to tackle on their own. The same applies to the huge economic and social opportunities created by modern technological and scientific advances. Only through joint efforts, mutual respect and cooperation can we successfully respond to global threats and challenges, such as terrorism and climate change, while also harnessing all the potential offered by the technological and scientific progress in order to accelerate our development.

Serbia has strongly supported multilateralism that we consider to be of essential importance to strengthen efficiency at the multilateral level. We see joint action, mutual agreement and respect as the only roadmap towards an answer to the rising global challenges which call for a devoted engagement within all of the multilateral fora. The Charter of the United Nations and the Bandung Principles remain as relevant today as they were at the time of their adoption. The importance attached to the respect for principles of multilateralism and international law was also affirmed at the 141st Assembly of the Inter-Parliamentary Union held earlier this month in Belgrade, with participation of more than 150 national parliamentary delegations and about 2000 delegates from all corners of the world.

Serbia has attached great importance to Sustainable Development Goals and the implementation of the 2030 Agenda, having exercised a responsible and serious approach in this process. We are convinced that the Agenda is the key component of the global efforts aimed at transforming the contemporary world in a positive way. Eradication of poverty, higher employment rates of youth in particular, economic growth, higher inclusiveness and improvement of education system and healthcare quality as well as full gender equality and preventing violence against women are at the core of our development strategy.

I would like to underline in particular the importance and role of youth connectivity worldwide, including between individuals who are geographically far apart, as an important asset bringing peoples and states closer together and getting them to know each other better. The Government of the Republic of Serbia attaches great importance to the programme offering scholarships to young people originating from the Non-Aligned Movement member and observer states within the project "The World in Serbia". Thanks to this programme, up to this year 427 students in total coming from NAM member and observer states attended the best universities in Serbia and we truly hope that this number will continue to grow in the years to come.

In concluding my statement, I wish to say to you in all sincerity that you may count on the friendship, good intentions, my personal support and partnership of the Republic of Serbia in meeting the objectives and principles of the Non-Aligned Movement and in making the world a better place for succeeding generations.

Thank you for your attention."

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