



### **Address by Minister Dacic at the Launch Conference on the EU Strategy for the Adriatic and Ionian Region**

The Republic of Serbia views the EU Strategy for the Adriatic and Ionian Region as a very good framework for a deeper practical cooperation with the EU countries, but also with countries in the region aspiring to membership of the European Union, said First Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Serbia, Ivica Dacic today in Brussels at the Conference on the occasion of the launch of the EU Strategy for the Adriatic and Ionian Region (EUSAIR).

Minister Dacic added that Serbian EU membership is not an end in itself, but an instrument of incentive for reforms and modernization in all areas of society and the state.

The address by the Minister reads as follows:

“Please allow me to express my satisfaction at attending this event, particularly in the light of today’s assessment of the results that the Republic of Serbia has achieved recently both in terms of strengthening its cooperation in the region, and of joining the European Union, which is our overarching foreign policy goal. The reforms we are intensively implementing in all segments of our society are the function of a contribution to the full realization of that goal. First of all, I would point out the activities relating to the further development of as efficient as possible institutional capacities in response to the challenges presented in a modern society. The Republic of Serbia as an EU candidate country endeavours to employ all available means to the fullest possible extent to establish the closest cooperation with the European Union and its member States, with a view to accelerating Serbia’s EU integration process and economic and social recovery.

We see the purpose of the EU Strategy for the Adriatic and Ionian Region primarily in the context of sharing the best practical experiences of the European Union, the identification and realization of common interests, strengthening state and local governments through training programmes and specific projects of cooperation, particularly in the field of the development of infrastructure, tourism and increasing investments, which are one of the key elements in improving the economic system. I believe that we will all, in line with our structural and reform resources, apply the best experiences from practice in order to implement credible economic reform programmes and thereby achieve sustainable economic growth that will bring about a better quality of life for our citizens and get us closer to European Union membership.

I would like to take this opportunity to point out that the Republic of Serbia views the EU Strategy for the Adriatic and Ionian Region as a good framework for a deeper practical cooperation both with the EU Member States and the partner countries in our region, which like Serbia, aspire to EU membership. The Strategy is a document which confirms that only through cooperation and development of good infrastructure, economic and cultural relations, can we achieve concrete results in the joint activities we are currently carrying out or in our future

activities, and contribute to the realization of key economic goals: to match our macro-economic systems to the high standards applicable in the EU, ensure that regional infrastructure is developing as the basis for the development of all other sectors, provide a predictable and stable business environment and use our comparative advantages at the local and European markets in the best possible way so that every citizen could feel the improvements in his everyday life as soon as possible.

I am pleased to inform you that in order to be able to embark upon a demanding implementation process of the EU Strategy for the Adriatic-Ionian Region responsibly and with quality, the Republic of Serbia is in the final stages of establishing the Government's special working body: the Working Group for Cooperation with the European Union in the Adriatic-Ionian Region. This Working Group will be tasked to coordinate all activities related to the EU Strategy for the Adriatic and Ionian Region.

Bearing in mind that the Republic of Serbia is the only one of the eight participating states of the Strategy which has no direct access to the sea, I want to emphasize that we are ready for an active approach and engagement of our institutions, in order to properly promote the importance of a functional synergy between the marine coast and the hinterland of the region, especially in the networking of transport and energy corridors.

On this occasion I would like to express our thanks for a very good cooperation to all our partners in the Adriatic-Ionian region, the European Commission, and in particular the partners from the Italian Republic, with whom we coordinate Pillar 2 of the Strategy "Connecting the Region". The Republic of Serbia considers this pillar as one of the key priorities in creating conditions for the continuous strengthening of cooperation in other fields, too. I want to emphasize that we will make maximum efforts to meet the strategic priorities of the thematic areas of the "Sustainable tourism" and "Environmental quality", using the advantages available to the Republic of Serbia through horizontal issues – "Capacity building", "Research and innovation", as preconditions for the creation of jobs, boosting competitiveness and growth of economic activities.

Finally, I would like to point out that in the previous period Serbia unequivocally reaffirmed its commitment to the European path, strengthening regional cooperation and good neighborly relations, and the normalization of relations with Pristina and the implementation of the agreements reached in the dialogue between Belgrade and Pristina. Serbia's EU membership is not an end in itself, but we look upon European integration primarily as an instrument of incentive to the implementation of reforms and modernization in all areas of society and the state. In this context, the initiated political and economic reforms serve as a strong impetus in the process of European integration and we see our future and the future of the region in the European Union.

Thank you for your attention."