



Address by First Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Serbia Ivica Dacic at the opening of the Seminar "Strengthening Institutional Cooperation between the International Organization of La Francophonie and Serbia and Central and East European countries, and Serbia's Francophonie Potentials":

"Madame Deerpalsing,

Madame Yotova,

Excellencies,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

First of all, I would like to thank the Francophonie leadership – Secretary General of the International Organization of La Francophonie (OIF) Michaëlle Jean and Administrator Adama Ouane for accepting our invitation to hold a seminar on strengthening institutional cooperation between the International Organization of La Francophonie and Serbia and other Central and East European Countries, and the Francophone potentials of the Republic of Serbia, whose opening session I have the great pleasure to address.

On behalf of the Republic of Serbia, I wish to congratulate OIF Secretary-General Michaëlle Jean on her successful leadership of the Organization and its active positioning on the international scene.

The Republic of Serbia truly shares the OIF values, whose motto is reflected in equality, complementarity and solidarity. We fully support the Organization's mission to enhance

linguistic and cultural differences and support study and use of the French language in international relations, as well as to promote peace, democracy and human rights, and development of cooperation aimed at sustainable economic development. We support and would like to join all activities of the Francophonie to the effect of keeping abreast with the current global developments in order to harmonize the Organization's goals and action with the challenges posed by international relations today. In this light, it is clear that, in a world of increasing global interdependence, Francophonie activities strongly contribute to the strengthening of peaceful intercultural dialogue and exchange.

The foremost foreign policy priority of the Republic of Serbia is full European Union membership, and we are actively committed to making progress in the process of negotiations and opening of new negotiation chapters. At the same time, we are making an utmost effort to enhance our cooperation both with the big countries like the USA, Russia and China, and all partners across the world, as well as to actively participate in the work of regional and international organizations. All the activities referred to are based on our resolve to pursue a principled and peaceful policy.

Given our ten-years-long participation and successful cooperation with the Francophonie (2006-2016), I would like to express the readiness of the Republic of Serbia to initiate, in the period ahead, the procedure for acquiring the status of a full-fledged member of the International Organization of La Francophonie.

At the Ministerial Conference in Yerevan, in October 2015, the Permanent Representative of the Republic of Serbia to the OIF signed - together with 16 Member States and Observer countries – with the OIF Administrator the Memorandum on National Francophone Initiative within the framework of the programme "French in International Relations" for the period 2016-2018. Preparations are underway for concluding an agreement on cooperation for 2019-2022. In the coming years, we intend to further reinforce activities within the framework of institutional cooperation with the Francophonie in cultural, educational and scientific areas, and all other OIF programmes, with emphasis on contribution to the strengthening of political and economic aspects of the Francophonie. Bearing in mind Serbia's foreign policy priority to become a full member of the European Union, we have an interest to cooperate with the countries of Central and Eastern Europe in EU-related programmes.

Regarding the fact that so-called Kosovo was granted an observer status in the OIF, at the Summit in Dakar, in November 2014, I would like to underline that Serbia neither wishes nor intends to see anyone isolated, but we are against politicization of the work of international organizations by OIF, UNESCO and the entire UN system. We are strongly committed to the dialogue between Belgrade and Pristina carried out with EU facilitation. We support Pristina's participation in the work of many regional and international initiatives, but on the basis of status neutrality and under UNSC resolution 1244.

In conclusion, I would like to reiterate the political will and readiness of the Government of the Republic of Serbia to make a big step towards enhancing institutional cooperation with the International Organization of La Francophonie and, after ten years of successful cooperation in the observer status, we would like to see Serbia become a full-fledged member and actively join

the Organization's work and programmes both in the main OIF bodies, as well as in regional and other OIF programmes and activities on the international level.

I wish you every success in your work at the seminar, confident that it will enable the implementation of the said goals.

Thank you."