



Statement by First Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Serbia Ivica Dacic at the opening of the Second Belgrade Conference:

"Distinguished guests,
Dear colleagues,

I would like to open the Second Belgrade Conference, together with Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Poland Jacek Czaputowicz. May I recall that the Conference is a unique form of cooperation, as a follow-up to the previous one held in Warsaw, a year ago. The Conference - predominantly aimed at exchanging experience between representatives of different institutions of the two countries in the process of Serbia's EU accession negotiations, is a special format whereby we have enriched our cooperation, as well as assumed particular responsibility for the state of our bilateral relations.

It is my pleasure to have the opportunity to work together with you, Minister Czaputowicz, to enhance cooperation between our two countries.

The relations between our countries are comprehensive and good, and I trust and believe that the regular political dialogue on the high and highest levels, and the readiness to further strengthen the cooperation between our two countries will continue throughout your term of office.

Over the past years, the Republic of Poland has become an important economic partner of the Republic of Serbia. I am confident indeed that you will make your best efforts to strengthen and step up the dynamics of our economic relations, and that an increasing number of Polish companies will find an interest to invest and do business on the Serbian market. Given the readiness on our own part to contribute significantly to that end, as well as our mutual efforts and your personal engagement, I am confident that we will not fall short of the results.

I would like to take this opportunity to underline, this time again, that EU membership is the foremost strategic priority of the Republic of Serbia. The path towards membership of the European Union is a historic opportunity for modernization and change, in line with the European values and standards. The fact that the Balkans and the EU need each other is the essential message of the Sofia Summit. Today's generations of European leaders have a good understanding of the importance of the European perspective for the economic development and stabilization of the Balkans, in the same way that Serbia understands EU membership as a way of fundamentally changing and modernizing its society and state. I further wish to refer to the importance of positive messages of the Enlargement Strategy indicating an approximate date for Serbia and Montenegro, as countries currently recognized as front-runners in this process, thus giving a positive impetus to the acceleration of internal reforms.

On the other hand, by addressing the complex issue of Kosovo and Metohija through dialogue between Belgrade and Pristina, the Republic of Serbia has been committed, from the outset, to reaching a compromise, just and durable solution, that will undoubtedly contribute to the stability and security of the entire region and Europe. Our efforts are aimed at ensuring conditions in Kosovo and Metohija for a normal life of all people, irrespective of their nationality. In this respect, the support of your country is particularly important and valuable to us.

Distinguished participants,

Dear guests,

I invite you to lend support through your experience, knowledge and goodwill, which you have been demonstrating from the beginning. I am confident that this Conference will provide a firm foundation for understanding and exchanging experiences, both positive and negative, in a series of future meetings that are to bring concrete results.

Dear Minister,

In conclusion, I have the pleasure to welcome you to our country, hoping that you will be able to assure yourself of the truthfulness of stories about Serbia - known for its hospitality.

Thank you for your attention."