



First Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs Ivica Dacic delivered the following remarks to the 88th NATO Parliamentary Assembly “Rose-Roth” Seminar, held today at the National Assembly of the Republic of Serbia:

“Mr. Vice President of the National Assembly,
Mr. Vice President of the NATO Parliamentary Assembly,
Distinguished Members of Parliament,
Excellencies,

I would like to welcome you and express my pleasure that the 88th NATO Parliamentary Assembly “Rose-Roth” Seminar is being held in Belgrade, in cooperation with the National Assembly of the Republic of Serbia. I am confident that this seminar, held in the framework of the regular inter-parliamentary dialogue, will contribute to better understanding of issues relevant to Serbia and the Western Balkan region on the European integration path and in strengthening regional cooperation and security.

I am pleased to note that - as a result of its reform processes in all segments of society, strengthening of international trust in Serbia and enhanced regional cooperation – Serbia has become a factor contributing significantly to security and stability in the Western Balkans whose long-term stability is one of the common priorities of all states in the region. We will continue our efforts aimed at promoting the political and economic stability of Serbia and the Western Balkan region, aware that promotion of regional cooperation and the process of reconciliation are a means of narrowing the differences and identifying common interests.

Regional cooperation is one of Serbia’s foreign policy priorities and we have clearly demonstrated, in the past period, our commitment to foster good-neighbourly relations and constructive dialogue in the region, which we see as a prerequisite for development and prosperity in this part of Europe. At the same time, regional cooperation accelerates the European integration of the Western Balkans, creating conditions for its infrastructural interconnectivity, economic progress and improvement of the people’s standard of living, that is, successful implementation of the region’s political and economic priorities.

As a country working its way towards EU membership, Serbia is encouraged by the fact that – despite the great many challenges facing the EU - European integration of the Western Balkans is still high on the European policy agenda. The Western Balkans is a part of the European community and its stronger ties with the region will accelerate both European and Euro-Atlantic integration of regional countries whose priorities are along these lines.

As you know, the top strategic priority of the Republic of Serbia is its EU membership, which enjoys broadest social and political consensus. Serbia sees this road as a historic opportunity to modernize and change, in line with the European values and standards. The significant political decisions adopted and implemented by the Government of the Republic of Serbia have been recognized also by the EU and, in this context, Serbia expects even stronger support by EU Member States in this process and the earliest possible opening of the first negotiation chapters. We have thus been encouraged by the positive tones of the recently adopted European Parliament Resolution on Serbia’s progress in the EU integration process, and EU readiness to open the first negotiation chapters in the course of this year, as conveyed by Federica Mogherini, EU High Representative for Foreign and Security Policy, during her last week’s visit to Belgrade. I therefore wish to reiterate Serbia’s readiness to continue the implementation of the essential reforms, in line with the suggestions contained in the Resolution and the Progress Report, in order to fully adopt European standards and norms.

You also know that, in the year marking the 40th anniversary of the signing of the Helsinki Final Act, Serbia has assumed the OSCE Chairmanship at a highly complex political juncture. As an organization, the OSCE includes a wide range of states with membership of different political, military and economic integration processes. Irrespective of this complexity, all participating States have recognized the importance of the OSCE as a platform for passing decisions aimed at de-escalating the crises.

The crisis in and around Ukraine dominates the agendas not only of the OSCE, but also of other fora dealing with the issue of European security. Serbia respects the territorial integrity and sovereignty of all UN Member States, including Ukraine. We are convinced that the crisis in Ukraine can be resolved solely by peaceful means and through diplomacy, along with the political will and comprehensive efforts of all stakeholders.

As regards its cooperation with NATO, Serbia is militarily neutral and has no aspirations towards NATO membership; however, it sees possibilities for further improvement of cooperation within the framework of the Partnership for Peace mechanism. NATO recognizes and honours Serbia’s specificities as compared to all other NATO Member States and partner countries. At the same time, Serbia recognizes NATO’s importance and the role played in the regional security system, primarily, its role in the safeguarding of peace and security, particularly the security of the Serbian people in Kosovo and Metohija, whose guarantor is NATO. Serbia wishes to be NATO’s reliable, responsible and foreseeable partner and interlocutor, to the effect of jointly contributing to the preservation of peace and stability in the region. Serbia’s active participation in the Partnership for Peace Programme from December 2006, including the meeting between Prime Minister Aleksandar Vucic and NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg at the Munich Security Conference, last February, as well as my own visit and the visit of Defence Minister Gasic to the NATO Headquarters this March, are an affirmation of these commitments. The adoption of Serbia’s Individual Partnership Action Plan

(IPAP) on 15 January 2015 will make a particular contribution to the further enhancement of cooperation in all areas of common interest. Serbia is interested in deepening the cooperation in the mutual interest, in spite of having no intentions of joining NATO, and respecting the membership aspirations of its neighbours.

I hope you will have a constructive and successful dialogue during this seminar, wishing you an enjoyable stay in our country.

I thank you for your attention.”