



Statement by First Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Serbia Ivica Dacic at the high-level meeting “Protecting Cultural Heritage – an Imperative for Humanity”, in New York:

“Ladies and Gentlemen,

The international community must have a zero tolerance for vandalism against cultural monuments of each and every stripe. Regrettably, we are witnessing the destruction and desecration of historical heritage of other cultures ever more frequently. Monuments of momentous importance for the history of mankind, exceptional and universal in value and often included on the UNESCO World Heritage List, are increasingly being targeted by extremists.

Driven by religious fanaticism, terrorists target works of art of exceptional significance for cultural heritage, recognized all over the world. The condemnation in the international public opinion, United Nations Security Council, UNESCO and numerous institutions of experts and scholars bear one message alone: Protecting cultural heritage is an imperative for the humankind. United in this mission, we all must work to the best of our abilities to raise awareness of the importance of cultural heritage for every man and woman, as well as for mankind as a whole, through education, culture, science and/or the media in order to save it for future generations.

Serbia has had to confront acts of vandalism on a part of its territory, administered by the United Nations under UNSCR 1244 (1999), ever since 1999. 236 churches, monasteries and other sites owned by the Serbian Orthodox Church, as well as other cultural-historical monuments, have been targets of attacks in Kosovo and Metohija. 61 of them have the status of cultural monuments, while 18 are of exceptional importance for Serbia. 174 religious sites and 33 cultural-historical monuments have been destroyed, while more than 10 000 icons and ecclesiastical-artistic and liturgical items have been stolen. Of particular concern is the scribbling of graffiti on protected cultural monuments, glorifying the Islamic State and a future Caliphate at the time when the international community is investing enormous efforts in confronting this evil.

It is exactly with full appreciation of the primary role of UNESCO in promoting and protecting world cultural heritage that Serbia has taken action diplomatically to prevent that acts of

deliberate, systematic and vandal destruction of cultural heritage in Kosovo and Metohija be rewarded with Kosovo's admission to the membership of UNESCO, the organization the purpose and goal of which is to promote and protect that heritage.

Thank you.”