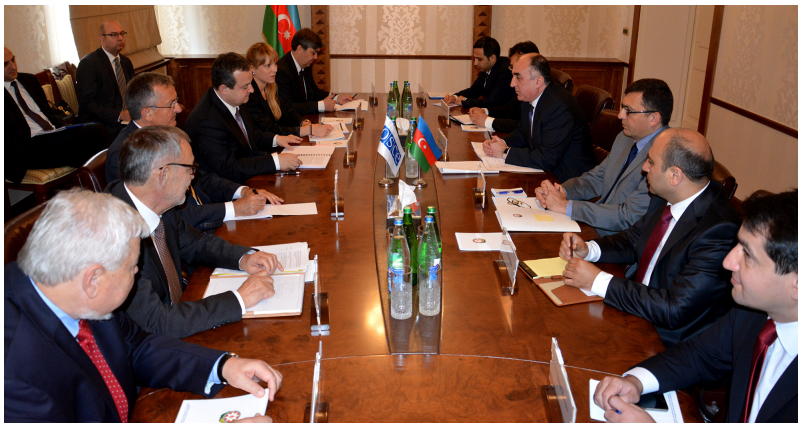




With his visit to Azerbaijan, today, First Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Serbia Ivica Dacic – in his capacity as OSCE Chairman-in-Office – started his three-day visit to OSCE Missions in the South Caucasus where he will also be visiting Georgia, on 2 June, and Armenia, on 3 June.

“As OSCE Chairman-in-Office, I would like to indicate that this region is of great importance for the stability of Europe as a whole, and that it is customary for the Chairman-in-Office to visit the region, i.e. to visit Azerbaijan, Georgia and Armenia. In addition to paying a visit, we also wish to provide assistance, meaning that we would like to see how we may contribute to the resolution of the conflict. Based on our own experience, the experience of Serbia, I sure that the only way to address problems is through dialogue, requiring the political will of all parties to reach a solution.

I conveyed the good will of Serbia, i.e. the OSCE Chair, to give good offices, both through the efforts of my Personal and Special Representatives, and Co-Chairs of the Minsk Group, in order to reach solutions acceptable to all parties. The situation requires commitment of other, bigger countries as well, for it is important to honour the ceasefire agreement, the truce that has long been reached, but unfortunately, there is still a grim record of victims and casualties”, the Minister underlined.

The Serbian Foreign Minister also pledged to Azerbaijani Foreign Minister Mammadyarov that he would discuss with Armenian Minister Nalbandian the issues related to imprisoned and missing persons, as well as initiatives concerning the possibility of a more liberal concept of freedom of movement in the region.

“As OSCE Chairman-in-Office, I wish to reiterate my conviction that the OSCE should be a partner of all the countries, wherever it is present, and that it should assist in addressing conflicts and supporting reforms in order to be a valuable factor there. The OSCE has been present in Serbia for as many as 20 years now and we had different experiences in that respect. Serbia is one of the countries having its own experience with the issue of double standards, and has for some time even been suspended from OSCE activities, and it is currently chairing the Organization. It is therefore necessary to seek the best possible ways for genuine practical implementation of the OSCE principles enshrined in the Helsinki Final Act, without double standards.”

Referring to Serbia's experience, Dacic stated that his country was particularly sensitive to the issue of territorial integrity and sovereignty, since Kosovo was an example of double standards in many respects.

"It is for this reason in particular that we wish to underline the major importance of the existence of political will to address all these issues with all parties, for if there is a political will, the Organization that Serbia is currently chairing will make a maximum effort to ensure that all these different ideas become operational and will endeavor to develop a durable solution to the conflict in the interest of all," said OSCE Chairman-in-Office Dacic.

Minister Dacic emphasized in Baku that Serbia and Azerbaijan were friendly countries and strategic partners, and that there was mutual readiness to develop bilateral relations in the political and economic areas, including sports and culture.

The Serbian Foreign Minister particularly drew attention to the fact that Azerbaijan would be hosting the first European Games, where Serbia would have 132 athletes, and that the attendance of President Nikolic at the opening ceremony was expected.