



Speech by OSCE Chairman-in, first Serbian Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs Ivica Dacic at a regional meeting of heads of OSCE missions in Southeast Europe that was held in Belgrade today:

“Excellencies,
Dear Participants,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

Welcome to Belgrade. It is my pleasure to be here with you today at the Annual Meeting of Regional Heads of OSCE Field Operations in South Eastern Europe.

Let me start by extending appreciation to the Conflict Prevention Centre and its Director, Ambassador Kobieracki, for organizing this gathering and for their engagement in our region.

I would also like to thank Ambassador Burkhard for organizing the event, as well as for the OSCE Mission to Serbia's continuous dedication to supporting reform processes in my country.

The meeting of Heads of regional Field Operations presents an excellent opportunity to discuss the work of the OSCE missions in the past year and provides an opportunity for a constructive exchange of opinions on issues pertaining to the Organization's activities in the region.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

The OSCE's presence in South-Eastern Europe has played a crucial role in the regional post-conflict transition process. The circumstances in the Western Balkans have significantly changed over the past twenty years since the OSCE is present there. Hardly anyone would have guessed two decades ago that Serbia will now chair the OSCE or that Bosnia and Herzegovina will assume the Chairmanship of the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe that took place on 19 May. The SEE region has made considerable progress on its path to European integration. Although the challenges facing us today differ from those at the time when the OSCE established its field presence, I believe that the OSCE, by promoting a wide range of reforms in the areas of human rights, rule of law and democracy, continues to make a contribution to the processes which are crucial in the European integration of the Western Balkans as the main priority of our countries, including, of course, Serbia. With its own unique experience of an OSCE field operation, Serbia has witnessed first-hand the benefits

that the OSCE can bring to a country in transition and to the Western Balkan region as a whole with regard to the fulfilment of the EU Agenda criteria.

However, despite the visible progress achieved, there are still many challenges to be addressed in the countries of the region through joint efforts and engagement of the OSCE.

The recent events on the Macedonian political stage have demonstrated that there is still a potential for destabilization. The events in Kumanovo earlier this month have introduced a new dimension to the crisis in that country. As you know, for this reason I have sent my Special Representative on the Western Balkans, Ambassador Gerard Stoudmann and Head of the OSCE Chairmanship Task Force, Ambassador Dejan Sahovic to Skopje. During their visit on 14 May, they had talks with representatives of both the government and the opposition, as well as with group of representatives of the NGO sector and a number of foreign Ambassadors.

The general impression after these discussions was that there was evidently no political will to open the necessary dialogue in order to overcome the crisis. Instead of a dialogue within the institutions face-off on the streets continues.

It seems that the international efforts made so far, including by the Members of the European Parliament (I. Vajgl, R. Horvit and E. Kukan) have not yielded any results yet. Nevertheless, these initiatives and efforts should definitely be pursued further. The OSCE has certain mechanisms that could be used to overcome the existing problems, and we as a Chair stand ready to engage in this process, should the Macedonian side ask us to do so.

As I have already mentioned, the events of Kumanovo bring in the potential for the destabilization to spread on to Macedonian neighbourhood. That is why all interested international actors, the EU in particular, should take serious account of the possible re-occurrence of a similar situation in the coming period. It is necessary to discourage adventurism of this kind in the most resolute way.

The OSCE can contribute to the international efforts to stabilize the situation in this participating State, to open the political dialogue within the governmental institutions, especially in the framework of the national Parliament. However, OSCE is not the key international player and can only act complementary to others, primarily the EU.

Ladies and gentlemen,

Serbian Chairmanship endeavours to underscore, in all its activities, the importance of the region for European stability and security. The creation of a positive agenda aimed at intensifying regional co-operation and furthering the reconciliation processes is indeed one of the key priorities of Serbia's Chairmanship.

The sustainable return and reintegration of displaced persons is another important precondition for regional reconciliation where the OSCE has been contributing significantly through its field operations. As an example of horizontal cooperation, I would also like to mention the initiative to promote dialogue and cooperation among prominent women in the region. Yesterday, Belgrade

was the venue of a successful promotion of a documentary “Follow Us”, aimed at bringing the Budva Process closer to the public.

In view of the fact that the region faces the same challenges, I believe that there are other areas where regional approach through horizontal interlinking of field missions could bring about improved results. An example of useful regional cooperation was also the recent Second Preparatory Meeting on the economic and environmental dimension devoted to exchange of experiences in dealing with consequences of floods which hit the region last year. This meeting was co-organized, among others, by the OSCE missions to Serbia and Bosnia and Herzegovina. In this context, I would like to take this opportunity to encourage all field operations in South Eastern Europe to further strengthen their mutual cooperation, identifying areas for joint approach to security issues and pursuing other similar common activities.

The Chairmanship stands ready to support future regional initiatives in relevant areas, including in particular combating corruption and promoting transparent and accountable governance. I also welcome the discussions that you will have on freedom of the media and promoting youth dialogue. All these topics are crucial for the European integration of the region. I am sure that today’s exchange of opinions will provide some material for new joint activities supporting reforms and reconciliation in South-Eastern Europe.

I wish you a productive and fruitful meeting.