



First Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of the Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Serbia Ivica Dacic during his official visit to Croatia met today with the highest-ranking officials of the Republic of Croatia.

The Head of Serbian diplomacy talked today with Croatian President Kolinda Grabar – Kitarovic. During the talks they confirmed the mutual readiness and good will for resolving open bilateral issues. The possibility of joint participation in regional projects of mutual interest such as the floods prevention project, was also discussed.

President Kitarovic pointed to the importance of the issue of minorities in both countries and reiterated her readiness for personal engagement with regard to the position of the Serbian minority in the Republic of Croatia.

Minister Dacic today also met with the Croatian Prime Minister, as well as the Speaker of the Parliament Josip Leko, with whom he talked about the solution of outstanding issues between the two countries, and also the current situation in the South-East Europe region.

Minster Dacic talked to his counterpart, First Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of the Foreign and European Integration Affairs of the Republic of Croatia Vesna Pusic. Speaking at a joint press conference they estimated that relations between Serbia and Croatia were very good and at a new level, and as Head of Croatian diplomacy pointed out: “Today we have renewed and added a breath of fresh air to the cooperation defined two years ago”.

“I am glad to be here today. I want to clearly stress the position of the Republic of Serbia that promotion of relations and cooperation with Croatia and solution of all outstanding issues is of the utmost importance for Serbia and stability in the whole region. Serbia wants to better relations of mutual appreciation and trust with Croatia. We are ready for constructive political dialogue, solving of all outstanding issues as well as for the promotion of cooperation in all areas, especially with regard to European integration, economic cooperation, and building ties between our countries and citizens”, pointed out the Head of Serbian diplomacy.

“It is important that we have divided our issues into three groups: one related to the issues from the past and outstanding problems, fully aware these should not burden our present and future cooperation. The following two groups are related to bilateral relations and economic cooperation, as well as issues from the field of European integration or possible joint projects, cooperation in the areas of infrastructure, energy and various other relations of great importance.

We should not build our relations upon irrational categories which are, either positive or negative, an obstacle to a more rational approach. We should recognize our mutual interests as the main pillar of our relations.

These relations should not fall victim to internal political circumstances either in Serbia or in Croatia. We should show our voters the ability to resolve problems in a practical manner and find mutual interests striving for prosperity of our citizens.

This change is important so that we can deal with our problems, because we have greatly contributed to their creation in the past, and this is the key message sent from all our meetings, but also from the meetings Prime Minister Vucic had during his visit on the occasion of President Kitarovic's inauguration", emphasized Minister Dacic.

Addressing the issue of missing persons, the Minister said that the available information should be compared and clear facts established. It is in the best interest of both Serbia and Croatia to know what happened to missing persons.

"Serbia is willing to work together with Croatia on solving the issue of refugees, because in Serbia alone, there are still 32,000 persons having a status of refugees from Croatia. There is a regional housing programme in place as an opportunity for Serbia and Croatia to solve the problem of refugees after 20 years.

Both Serbia and Croatia have been under scrutiny of international institutions for years, among other things, because of war crimes prosecution. The Law on jurisdiction was highly regarded by those investigating war crimes. It enabled indictment of 170 persons for crimes committed on the territory of Bosnia and Herzegovina and Croatia, only two of whom are Croatian citizens, while all the rest are Serbian. If it had not been for that jurisdiction their conviction would not have been possible.

With regard to specific cases, during his visit to Croatia, Prime Minister Vucic already had talks on the topic with Prime Minister Milanovic as well, and it was confirmed that efforts would be made in resolving such issues on best humanitarian grounds.

We live together in this area, we have been neighbours for centuries, the choice is ours whether to live in conflict, isolation and hatred or to discuss and articulate our interests together for the benefit of all of us, and this is the reason of my being here today", said Minister Dacic at a press conference in Zagreb.