Minister Dacic participates in the Western Balkans 6 meeting in Pristina

Wednesday, 25 March 2015.

"Mr. Chairman,
Dear Commissioners,
Dear colleagues,
Ladies and gentlemen,

I am pleased for having the opportunity to participate in this regional meeting which contains in its very name the symbolism of our today's meeting, which is a follow-up to the one we held in Belgrade only six months ago in the same format, and to the ones to be held in the future, "Improving connectivity".

After a lot of turbulence, genuine progress has undoubtedly been made in the Western Balkan region, both in respect of building peace and democracy, and in the context of regional cooperation and European integration. In this regard, I felt proud when I heard that EU High Representative Federica Mogherini said in her statement in the UN Security Council meeting devoted to cooperation between the UN and regional and sub-regional organizations in New York, on 9 March 2015 that "The Balkans offers us all, today, reasons to be proud and optimistic". I have understood this message both as a commendation, and as an obligation. An obligation which is in our mutual interest: to enhance our cooperation, to improve regional stability, and to struggle first and foremost for a better and more prosperous life of Serbian citizens.

The prospect of EU membership has been the main driving force behind a number of reform activities and positive developments in the region. It will remain one in the future as well. I am confident that it will continue to contribute to the strengthening of all forms of connectivity, from youth and sport to economy and economic development, to the vital infrastructural projects. I fully agree with Commissioner Hahn in his assessment that the application of the goals from the "Berlin Process" will lead to tangible results that will make the region more unified and closer to the EU. I would like to add that the cross-cutting projects that have been launched or are still in the pipeline increase our expectations and hopes, and the awareness of the fact that we should invest more efforts to fulfil our common goals.

I would like to assure you on this occasion as well that Serbia is ready to step up its reform efforts that have already yielded concrete and tangible results, and to cooperate more closely both with the countries in the region and the EU Member States, with the aim of achieving sustainable economic growth that will bring us closer to EU membership. Genuine cooperation constitutes the basis for stability of our region, where the Republic of Serbia will persevere as a reliable partner.

Even as I speak, a question comes to my mind: who would be the main proponents of these progressive ideas? The answer is clear - primarily and unquestioningly youth, like in everything progressive and positive. In this context, please let me recall that the Serbian Prime Minister launched an initiative for the creation of the Western Balkan Youth Union, an idea which he first put forward at the Western Balkan Summit that took place in Berlin in August 2014. Its aim is precisely what we are talking about today - forging ties, i.e. establishing sustainable regional cooperation among young people and institutions intended for them. I am confident that in the long run this will result in the stability and progress of the region, and contribute to the strengthening of democracy and tolerance, preconditions of stability and the sorely needed prosperity.

Connectivity in infrastructure and transport will feature as the main topic of discussions today, for it is vital for greater mobility of people, movement of goods and strengthening of regional economies. I believe both in the common European future of the Western Balkans, and in its economic prospects and competitiveness owing to our major asset - youth, well-educated people that need to be employed meaningfully, but also owing to the transport network we are planning to build together, aided by our friends and partners from the European Union, with the aim of full integration of the Western Balkans in the core network of European transport routes.

Thank you for your kind attention."