



Remarks by First Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Serbia Ivica Dacic at a panel discussion “Stemming the tide of radicalization: can we arrive at an overarching response?”

“Ladies and gentlemen,

Serbia is firmly committed to respond to the contemporary security challenges among which the fight against terrorism, all forms of extremism and radicalization are our common task of priority importance. We stand ready to contribute to dealing with these threats at national, regional, European and global levels, in coordination with our partners worldwide, and the EU in particular.

Serbia strongly condemns terrorism in all its forms, as well as all forms of extremism and radicalism, because we are aware that the complexity of these phenomena call for coordinated action at a broad international level and require that all its aspects be addressed with the aim of an all-encompassing response.

Terrorism, extremism and radicalization know no frontiers. Spread of ideas of radical Islam and recruitment for jihad in Syria and Iraq have also been detected in the territory of Serbia and in its nearest neighbourhood. Serbia itself is faced with the problem of foreign fighters, i.e. the departure of its nationals to war on the side of IS, chiefly via radical Islamic preachers and centers. Radical Islam preachers in the Raska region in southwest Serbia and in Kosovo and Metohija perform religious rites at religious centers funded from abroad in an extremist way and recruit young people for the so-called wars of religion. The number of mercenaries from Serbia, by and large from the Raska area, is small in terms of percentages in comparison with the overall number of foreign fighters among extremist armed groups. The number slightly exceeds one hundred individuals, but it is not negligible for my country, especially having in mind the possible consequences following their return, when they have been trained by religious fanatics.

With the aim of curbing these challenges, Serbia immediately joined the international level activities. We have reiterated on several occasions our readiness to assist in the struggle against the scourge of the modern age embodied in terrorism, within the limits of

our possibilities and in line with the resources at our disposal. Serbia cosponsored UNSC Resolution 2178 and passed very quickly, early in October 2014, amendments to its legislation, aimed at preventing the departure or transit of persons over its territory for the purpose of participating in conflicts in other countries by criminalizing such participation, as well as organizing, encouraging and recruiting of foreign fighters.

We have started instituting proceedings against a handful of Serbian nationals suspected of involvement in conflicts as IS members in Syria. We have tightened border controls and stepped up monitoring of returnees. We take an active part in the work of international and regional meetings, in exchange of information and prevention of IS ideology dissemination. Moreover, a functional system for the fight against terrorism funding was established in Serbia. We execute our international obligations responsibly and consistently in the context of implementation of UNSC resolutions on imposing an embargo on arms sales, prohibitions relating to non-state actors, including terrorist organizations and individuals affiliated with them. Serbia also makes its own contribution as a member of the Global Coalition to Counter IS.

We are aware that suppression of terrorism and extremism by repressive, military and police measures is insufficient and that the integration of citizens of all confessions and political and other backgrounds into the modern society on the basis of common values, but respecting the right to identity and appreciation of everyone's religious, ethnic and other origins and heritage, are vital in the fight against terrorism, extremism and radicalisation.

We strive to make our contribution to the fight against terrorism from our position of the country currently holding the OSCE Chairmanship as well. From this responsible position, assumed at a very complex and challenging moment in terms of geopolitics, we particularly have in mind the fact that security in Europe and in the wider OSCE area heavily depends on the situation in neighbouring regions. Particularly having in mind that terrorism and the phenomenon of foreign terrorist fighters present a serious security threat both to the OSCE area and to its wider neighbourhood we have opted to put, in the course of Serbian Chairmanship, the fight against terrorism on the agenda of the OSCE conference on the first, politico-military dimension, with special emphasis laid on the problem of foreign terrorist fighters. We believe that in the wake of the tragic events in Paris and Copenhagen we should devote due attention to this phenomenon, as it is extremely important for European and broader international security.

I would also like to recall another priority of Serbia's OSCE Chairmanship which concurs with one of the priorities of the Serbian Government- young people who have always in all societies been the main proponents of progressive ideas. They are also one of the most vulnerable categories today in the context of current trends of spreading radicalism and extremism in the world. I would also like to remind you of our initiative to form the Western Balkan Youth Union, with the aim of networking, i.e. establishing sustainable regional cooperation among the young and youth institutions, with a long-term vision of contributing to stability and progress of the region and strengthening democracy and tolerance, preconditions for stability and the sorely needed prosperity.

The topic of our today's panel discussion is whether the overall response to the wave of radicalization is possible. It is evident that the more all-encompassing the response is, the more

effective it will be. In this regard we have no choice. We have to tackle the challenges facing us all in the most all-embracing way possible, for in the world of complex global interdependence, cooperation and coordination in countering terrorism, radicalism, lack of tolerance for the minorities and other forms of extremism, have no alternative.

Thank you for your kind attention.”