



OSCE Chairperson-in-Office, First Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Serbia Ivica Dacic delivered an address today at the international conference “European Security Policy at the Crossroads”, held in Belgrade.

The Head of Serbian diplomacy emphasized that since the outbreak of the crisis in and around Ukraine, Serbia had been very actively involved on two tracks at the same time. On the one hand, our efforts were targeted at conflict cessation and opening of the political process of crisis settlement. On the other hand, they were focused on initiating a debate on the ramifications of the crisis for the European security structure and ways of removing or beginning to overcome, the negative and potentially very long-term consequences.

“OSCE is the sole international organization that is dealing with the crisis in and around Ukraine on the ground in a comprehensive way. OSCE is at the core of the European security architecture, endangered, debating on how to direct it to the right track at this crossroads, that of recovery of the security structures of Euro-Atlantic and Euro-Asian areas”, Minister Dacic said.

He assessed that the security policy architecture in Europe has failed the test of foresee the future and underlined that we should decide whether we wanted Europe of walls and fences or Europe of mutual trust and solving of problems.

In addressing this international conference he pointed out that he was not referring to the OSCE early warning mechanisms but rather to the growing context of various crises worldwide that took us by surprise and also tens and hundreds of thousands different institutions that make analysis of the international situation.

The OSCE Chair said that the Ministerial Council meeting, held in Kyiv in 2013, did not adequately discuss the crisis that erupted in that country only two months later.

“We have been warning for months already that a joint approach with other international organizations should be adopted in Macedonia, but they could not find the time to deal with this issue. Now we are dealing with the consequences. I am afraid that it takes a lot more political wisdom and reflection to restore the OSCE nature that it had at the beginning, to be a bridge between East and West, the best mechanism and platform for conflict prevention and removal

of its negative aftermath. This is in essence what should be done in the period ahead”, Dacic said expressing his conviction that Serbia was performing its task well in that regard.

He warned that the European security policy was at a crossroads, in the context of “whether we are going to embark on mutual reinforcement and rebuilding confidence and cooperation or on building walls and fences”. The Head of the Serbian diplomacy said that this was not an issue for Serbia or Hungary but for Europe because we are “getting a new fence in 2015, just some time after the anniversary of the Fall of the Berlin Wall”.

“Do we want Europe of walls and fences or Europe of mutual trust and of problem- solving. The fence is absolutely a bad message that definitely affects the OSCE as well”, said Dacic. He stated that tectonic disturbances caused stones falling in front of you and the distinction between a politician and a statesman was whether he used these stones to throw at someone or build bridges with.

“ We are trying to build bridges and not to use stones for creating walls and fences and humiliate and degrade our colleagues and partners in the region and Europe”, Dacic said.

The Head of Serbian diplomacy underscored that the OSCE was an organization with political ties with Serbia because Serbia took part in its inception as part of the former Yugoslavia, recalling that both topics and theses that Tito had in his speech 40 years ago were very similar to the current ones. “ In the political context, except for having no bloc division of the world, there is an environment, terminology and rhetoric of the Cold War and even divisions based along these lines”, Dacic said.

The OSCE Chairmanship is therefore a test for Serbia in the context of whether Serbia is a serious enough state that can be the Chair of such an Organization, instead of being the “topic” as was the case two decades ago. OSCE is currently the only international organization dealing comprehensively with the crisis in and around Ukraine, with all the difficulties in consensus decision-making.

“We succeeded in making a few steps forward. For the first time in a long time the OSCE budget was adopted on time. The previous budget was adopted in May with almost half-year delay. We agreed on the draft decision on the extension of the Mission’s mandate in Ukraine from six to twelve months and we secured an increase in the number of observers from 500 to 1000, if necessary. The mandate of the Mission at the border between Russia and Ukraine was extended till the end of September 2015. Perhaps the most difficult task is the Trilateral Contact Group on Ukraine to be headed by my new Special Representative Martin Sajdik”, Dacic explained.

“I believe that the work of the Trilateral Contact Group and its working groups is of essential importance for the continuation of the political process”, Dacic said.

The Trilateral Contact Group comprises four working groups on security, humanitarian, economic and political affairs, which is perhaps the most important one because it implies decentralization, electoral system, changes in the constitution and local elections in the east.

Unfortunately, the crisis in and around Ukraine is not the only existing conflict. “Other conflicts are frozen ones. The big question is to what extent is each of these conflicts frozen and at what stage of freezing. There are conflicts that are allegedly frozen such as Nagorno-Karabakh in which there were human victims at the beginning of the year and that is why we cannot talk about the frozen conflict if there are clashes and victims”, Dacic said adding that he intended to visit all OSCE field missions.

Minister Dacic recalled that the Panel of Eminent Persons was established to define proposals for the future work of the Organization and their report was due prior the Ministerial meeting on 3 and 4 December in Belgrade, which was going to be the largest political event in Belgrade since the time of the Non-Aligned Summit Conference, thus creating an opportunity for discussions on the future of the Organization.

“Within the existing framework, OSCE is the only regional platform that brings all key stakeholders to the table, keeps the communication lines open and finds opportunities for joint action.

In order to make the European security architecture more resilient, we have to replace the existing culture of confrontation with the one of cooperation and joint action. This task will be both a challenging and a long-term one but apparently the only possible one.

We must keep in our minds that we share the responsibility for peace and security in Europe. We need to look at the roots of the Helsinki process and values it was based upon and learn from the commitment of the Cold War leaders to work together.

Restoring of trust among OSCE participating States, with respect for the fundamental shared principles and commitments should be key elements of our joint endeavours. In spite of all that is happening, the Helsinki principles are still good and there is no need to re-examine them. Instead, we should work together to reaffirm and strengthen them in good faith and to make the violation of the same more difficult.

In view of the above, I have convened an informal and inclusive high-level meeting in Helsinki next month, aimed at discussing the implications of the current crisis for the European security and particularly for the OSCE. The Meeting will also mark the 40th anniversary of the Helsinki Final Act. My Troika counterparts, Swiss and German Ministers will also attend the meeting. We shall aspire to finding common ground for progress in the dialogue on security and cooperation”, the Head of Serbian diplomacy said.