



First Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Serbia Ivica Dacic held today a regular press conference at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

“The Ministry I am heading worked intensively and with dedication, over the past month, in order to protect the country’s national interests and prevent so-called Kosovo from joining international institutions such as UNESCO and INTERPOL in defiance of international law. In addition, the Ministry’s regular activities included strengthening of regional and bilateral cooperation.

In early August, I paid a two-day visit to the Islamic Republic of Iran where I met the President of Iran Hasan Ruhani; President of the Islamic Consultative Assembly of the Islamic Republic of Iran Ali Larijani; Ali Akbar Velayati, Political Advisor to the Supreme Leader of the Iranian Islamic Revolution Ali Khamenei; Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif, as well as Minister of Industry, Mining and Trade Mohammad Reza Hematzadeh.

I congratulated our Iranian friends on reaching the Agreement on the Nuclear Programme, expressing desire for the enhancement of friendly relations between our countries in all areas. Accordingly, mutual interest was expressed for intensifying political dialogue at the high and highest levels, and for holding political consultations at the Assistant Minister level, aimed at conducting comprehensive discussions on bilateral and multilateral issues.

I extended my gratitude for Iran’s principled position regarding non-recognition of the unilaterally declared independence of Kosovo and Metohija. The Iranian side underlined that their country’s position on Kosovo and Metohija constituted one of the fundamental principles of Iran’s foreign policy, reflecting rational conduct based on international law.

Energy security was also discussed, as well as the human rights issue. We agreed that steps were to be taken towards full visa liberalization for Serbian and Iranian nationals.

I attended the opening of the new Suez Canal ceremony. This important historic event was attended by more than 20 Presidents and Prime Ministers, including French President Francois Hollande, Russian Prime Minister Dmitry Medvedev, then Greek Prime Minister Alexis Tsipras, whom I met on the sidelines of the ceremony, as well as many high officials from the world over.

I also met with my colleague, Foreign Minister of Egypt Sameh Shoukry and President of Egypt

el-Sisi.

This was an important meeting, as we would like to restore the relations between the two countries, which were hampered in the period after the previous Egyptian regime had decided to recognize the unilaterally declared independence of Kosovo and Metohija. We are making an effort to relativize the decision as much as possible, and to develop good bilateral relations with Egypt.

I also had a meeting with Serbian Patriarch Irinej, which was attended by Serbian Ambassador to UNESCO Darko Tanaskovic, members of the Holy Synod – Metropolitan of Montenegro and the Littoral Amfilohije and Bishop of Backa Irinej. Discussions were focused on the activities related to the aspirations of so-called “Kosovo” for admission to UNESCO membership. The interlocutors expressed readiness for full cooperation, and discussed specific modalities for making coordinated efforts to protect the interests of the Republic of Serbia and the Serbian Orthodox Church in Serbia’s southern province.

In this context, I also participated in the UN Security Council meeting devoted to UNMIK’s work between 16 April and 15 July 2015.

I thanked the Security Council members for devoting continued attention to the issue of Kosovo and Metohija, which is of paramount importance to Serbia, as well as the outgoing Head of Mission Farid Zarif for the efforts made in the implementation of the Mission’s mandate.

I underlined that, through its proactive involvement and compromise-based approach, Serbia endeavoured to contribute to lasting peace, stability and prosperity in the Western Balkan region. Exceptional results were achieved also in strengthening regional cooperation and in the European integration process, to which Serbia is rendering an important contribution. The Government of the Republic of Serbia confirmed in practice its full commitment to dialogue conducted with EU facilitation and that it was consistent in fulfilling its obligations based on the agreements reached thus far. In addition to the establishment of the Community of Serbian Municipalities, the issues concerning the return of internally displaced persons, the status of the Serbian Orthodox Church, and property issues will continue to figure in the further dialogue with Pristina.

I underlined the constructive approach by the Government of the Republic of Serbia to the issue of participation of provisional institutions of self-government of KiM in the work of regional fora, without prejudice to status.

As a territory under UN administration pursuant to UNSC resolution 1244(1999), Kosovo is not and cannot be regarded as a state with international legal personality nor can it, consequently, qualify for membership of the aforementioned and similar organizations likewise.

I pointed out the exceptional importance of the UN Mission to Kosovo and Metohija, since UNMIK’s status neutral presence, in the unchanged capacity, is essential to the stability and creation of conditions aimed at finding a durable and sustainable solution to the Kosovo and Metohija issue, based on UNSC resolution 1244(1999). Serbia strongly opposed any

downsizing of the Mission and diminishing of its activities, and expects UNMIK to continue to discharge its mandate under UNSC resolution 1244 (1999).

Providing conditions for sustainable return of internally displaced persons (IDPs) from Kosovo and Metohija is one of the key segments in the reconciliation process. Despite perennial international presence, even sixteen years after the conflict ended, conditions have not yet been in place there for unhampered and sustainable return of IDPs, which has been noted also in the regular Reports of the UN Secretary-General on the work of UNMIK and in UNHCR reports. I also warned of continued desecration of Serbian monasteries, as an additional deterrence for the remaining Christian Orthodox population in the Province. The latest example is the attack on the Serbian Orthodox Church of St. Paraskeve, in the returnee village of Drsnik.

The presence of Serbian heritage in Kosovo and Metohija proves the centuries-long presence of the Serbian people in the Province. Therefore, attacks on the Serbian heritage are attacks on Serbian identity, having a direct bearing on their sense of acceptance in the local community. This is all part and parcel of the process of historical fact alteration aimed at marginalizing and eliminating Serbs and Serbia from the history of Kosovo and Metohija.

An additional proof of this is the Law on Cultural Heritage, whose adoption in Kosovo's Parliament is underway, which denies private ownership of the Serbian Orthodox Church over monasteries and churches in Kosovo and Metohija, indicating that this and any other heritage in the territory of the Province constitutes cultural heritage owned by the "state of Kosovo".

I further reiterated that Serbia condemned any vandalizing of holy sites no matter what religion they belonged to. However, while pillage and destruction of cultural and religious heritage in the Middle East by ISIS is strongly condemned throughout the world, as being an act of terrorism, those who are despoiling and destroying Serbian cultural heritage sites in Kosovo and Metohija are seeking UNESCO membership, and are patted on the shoulder in approval. This is utterly and wholly unacceptable to the Republic of Serbia.

After the UNSC meeting, I had a very good meeting with UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon. We spent an hour discussing different topics, the most important for us being the one on Kosovo and Metohija. Secretary-General Ki-moon reiterated that UNMIK mission in Kosovo and Metohija, to be headed by his new Special Representative Tanin, will strictly abide by UNSC Resolution 1244, which will continue to be the cornerstone of UN policy regarding the problem of Kosovo-Metohija.

We also discussed Kosovo's request for UNESCO membership. He reiterated that the UN refused to submit Kosovo's application to that effect and that the UN will continue to honour UNSC resolution 1244.

Our talks further dealt with the highly successful cooperation in the context of peace operations. Serbia is in seventh place in Europe and first in the region according to the size of its military and police personnel contributed to UN peace-keeping operations. We talked about preparations for opening the UN House in Serbia, where all UN specialized agencies resident in Belgrade would be located, which, we agreed, would be an opportunity for Secretary-General

Ban Ki-moon to visit Belgrade by the end of this or the beginning of next year, in February or March.

I participated also in the First Conference of States Parties to the Arms Trade Treaty (ATT) that took place in Cancun (Mexico), on 24-27 August 2015. I addressed the High-Level Segment of this international event, as one of the Foreign Ministers heading their national delegations who addressed the Conference.

This Treaty is an international legally binding document, defining on the global level, the criteria, principles and bans, including obligations from the set of international instruments to be respected in the area of international humanitarian law, and introducing new standards to be observed by the States Parties granting approval for conventional arms transfers. For the first time, the UN Member States agreed on the set of common standards and principles related to issues concerning the transfer of arms. The purpose of the ATT, among other things, is to ensure maximum credibility of arms trade and greater transparency of the process, to strengthen cooperation among states and reduce illicit trafficking as much as possible.

I also had a series of bilateral meetings with my colleagues, the Foreign Ministers of Mexico, Luxembourg, Trinidad and Tobago; State Secretary of Jamaica; Deputy Foreign Minister of Guatemala and the Under-Secretary for Foreign Affairs in the MFA of Argentina.

The purpose of my visit to Mexico was accomplished, which was to consolidate the relations with countries having a friendly attitude towards Serbia, as well as towards its fundamental and most difficult issue of Kosovo and Metohija.

I also took part in the two-day Western Balkan Conference in Vienna, where the Foreign Ministers and Ministers of Economic Affairs of the WB countries held separate parallel meetings with EU officials.

At the Luxembourg Ministerial Council Meeting on migrants, I presented the latest information available to us: that 120,000 people have crossed the border so far; 108,000 intended to seek asylum in Serbia; and that only 500 people formally applied for asylum, indicating that they do not wish to remain in Serbia. Discussions focused also on measures undertaken by some countries individually: some announced further radicalization of these measures, like Hungary, while Macedonia is seeking solutions in case the crisis of migratory flows intensifies further.

On the other hand, I took this opportunity to have a number of bilateral meetings concerning the foreign policy situation of Serbia. I had talks with Ministers of Foreign Affairs of Slovakia Miroslav Lajcak, and of Romania Bogdan Auresku, as well as with Hungarian Foreign Minister Peter Szijjarto who informed me of further steps and actions to be taken by his country.

As regards Serbia's OSCE Chairmanship, I received this week my Special Representative in Ukraine and in the Trilateral Contact Group, Ambassador Martin Sajdik, and Head of OSCE Special Monitoring Mission in Ukraine (SMMU), Ambassador Ertugrul Apakan. The Meeting was also attended by OSCE Secretary-General Lamberto Zannier.

I was informed of the developments following my visit to Minsk, on 21 July 2015, where I

attended the meeting of the Trilateral Contact Group (TCG).

We noted that the ceasefire agreement reached last week at the TCG meeting in Minsk, on the occasion of the beginning of the school year, was generally respected. I hope that this fragile ceasefire will serve as a point of departure for making progress in the implementation of the Minsk agreements.