



"Over the past few days, we have been faced with yet another unscrupulous campaign against the Government of Serbia. On the one hand, the Government came under attack for allegedly taking Serbia into NATO, and on the other, for being too close to Russia because of the Serbian-Russian Humanitarian Centre in Nis.

As regards NATO, I would like to recall that Serbia is pursuing a policy of military neutrality, and that former Serbian President Boris Tadic signed the Framework Document in Brussels, on 14 December 2006, whereby Serbia formally became the participant of the Partnership for Peace programme. This was followed by the handing over of the Presentation Document defining areas of cooperation with NATO, by then Foreign Minister Vuk Jeremic, at NATO Headquarters, on 5 September 2007. Let me further recall that Prime Minister Kostunica was in power at the time. All our activities regarding cooperation with NATO thus far were defined in these documents, including IPAP, as a more advanced form of cooperation. The Government of Serbia has not adopted any legal act providing for Serbia's participation in NATO Membership Action Plan, which is respected by NATO. Both SOFA agreement and Logistic Support Agreement are signed with all partner states. In the case of Serbia, this creates conditions for the modernization of the Technical Repair Institute in Kragujevac. As for the NATO-Serbia SOFA Agreement it is a bilateral arrangement according privileges also to Serbian Armed Forces in NATO territory, unlike the agreement signed by Tadic and Condoleezza Rice, granting privileges solely to the US military, to which the Government of Kostunica agreed.

With regard to Nis, the Governments of Serbia and Russia signed, on 20 October 2009, during the visit by then President Medvedev, in the presence of President Tadic, the Agreement on cooperation in the areas of emergency humanitarian response, prevention of natural disasters and technogenic accidents, and overcoming their consequences. This Agreement envisaged the establishment of the Serbian-Russian Humanitarian Centre in Nis and the legal status for the Russian personnel as enjoyed by the administrative and technical staff of the Russian Embassy under the 1961 Vienna Convention on Diplomatic Relations. The issue of their diplomatic status has never been raised.

Apparently, both cases reflect a false concern, serving as an excuse for launching yet another unscrupulous attack on the Government of Serbia which is conducting a clear policy: military neutrality, EU membership and friendly relations with Russia."