



Address by First Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Serbia Ivica Dacic at today's conference "The European Union's Global Strategy on Foreign and Security Policy and the Western Balkans":

"Dear Mr. McAllister,

Dear Ms. Tocci,

Dear Mr. Pajevic,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

To begin with, allow me to thank the ISAC Fund for inviting me to open this conference on behalf of the Government of the Republic of Serbia. We are very glad to be able to hear first-hand and in as much detail as possible about the EU's Global Strategy on the Common Foreign and Security Policy, which was just presented at the recent European Council meeting of 28 June 2016. It is thanks to the organizers and to the readiness of Ms. Tocci, who as the closest associate of High Representative for Foreign and Security Policy Ms. Federica Mogherini worked dedicatedly on the preparation of the Global Strategy in the past year, to come here and share her experiences with us, that it is Belgrade where today's important conference takes place.

The Republic of Serbia followed attentively the process of devising the EU's Global Strategy, although it had not been part of it. This was important to us for several reasons. As a country having started its EU membership negotiations, of which alignment with the Common Foreign and Security Policy is an important segment, we wanted this topic to be present within the institutions in charge of the issues the Strategy covered. Furthermore, the world and therefore the EU and the Western Balkans region as well, which plays if not the key, then certainly a highly important role in the EU's security, have currently been facing numerous temptations and great challenges. We could mention some of these, namely the migration crisis, terrorism, radicalism, religious fanaticism, energy supply diversification, climate change, etc. Although there may not be a direct causal link, we cannot disregard the significant influence the consequences of the migration crisis exerted on the majority of UK citizens voting in favour of

leaving the European Union. In this regard, the EU probably could not have chosen a better moment to send its clear response than that of two weeks ago by presenting its umbrella strategic document defining clearly its position on the challenges faced in the area of Foreign and Security Policy.

As you are certainly well aware, having gone through the screening process on chapter 31, a chapter which is the competence of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Serbia has actually started its negotiations on foreign, security and defence policies. I would like to take this opportunity to point out the broader context of Serbia's contribution to the EU's Common Foreign and Security Policy, primarily because this segment is often perceived solely in terms of percentages of alignment with EU decisions in this area which do not reflect the factual situation.

I would like to remind you that following the signing of the Stabilization and Association Agreement with the EU in 2008, Serbia started the process of the alignment with the EU's Common Foreign and Security Policy although it was legally obligated to do so only after the SAA entered into force in 2013. In that period of time our percentage of alignment was 99%. I also wish to underline that in the process of decision-making Serbia had a continued consistent stance that at this very stage of the accession process it could not uphold all EU decisions. In some cases Serbia did not align with the EU positions, respecting its national interest concerning the issue of preserving its territorial integrity and the need to maintain traditionally good relations with other partners as well, first and foremost with Russia and China. That is the standpoint we had from the very beginning but it has become particularly visible since 2014, when the number of decisions concerning the Russian Federation increased to great extent and when our alignment percentage fell to 62%. Since then Serbia has progressively increased statistics which in the previous year was 65% and right now is 63% with the tendency of further growth till the end of the year.

In many segments such as the adoption of the legislation, creation of the legal basis for security cooperation, progress in the area of arms control, its commitment to multilateralism and primarily through its contribution by participating in EU and UN military missions, Serbia has proven to be a reliable and true partner of the EU. I would like to recall that currently, there are 336 Serbian army personnel participating in UN and EU multinational operations, of which 29 are part of EU peace missions. In relation to its population, Serbia is first-ranking in the region and eighth in Europe concerning its contribution. We believe that we could make an important contribution to the participation in EU civilian missions as well as missions mandated by other international organizations. The competent authorities of the Republic of Serbia have put together with ISAC fund the project on the strengthening of capacities in this area and we expect assistance of all interested EU countries.

Our strategic foreign policy orientation is full EU membership but unfortunately we must note that the process has not had a particularly live dynamics so far because in the last two years we opened only two negotiating chapters. We are encouraged by the continuation of the process on 18 July, when two crucial reform and political chapters 23 and 24 will be opened. We will continue our dedicated work towards achieving our goal and that is to open other negotiating chapters by the end of the year, chapters that are already ready to be opened, such as chapter 5 or other chapters that are well advanced in the preparatory process, such as chapters 20, 25

or 26.

Tomorrow it will be two years exactly since the explanatory screening meeting on chapter 31 was held and some months later in my capacity as Foreign Minister I headed the delegation at the bilateral screening meeting. Even at that time one of our chief messages was that Serbia wished to have a continued and open dialogue and communication with the EU institutions and member states on all issues of importance for both sides in the area of Common Foreign and Security Policy. Although the screening report on chapter 31 is still the subject of discussion of COELA, we did have an intensive communication in the past year both on inter-sectoral level and with our European partners in order to prepare better for the opening of chapters when the time comes. In conclusion, I wish to send a message to all countries that have not given their consent yet for chapter 31 screening report, that the more we progress in the negotiating process the deeper we go into the reform process which also includes implementation of measures having the specific political weight and legitimacy.

The message that the EU has sent in its Global Strategy concerning our region is very important to us – a credible enlargement policy is a strategic investment in Europe's security and prosperity, and it will continue to be based on a clear, strict, and fair accession process. The region of the Western Balkans and the EU share the same challenges, requiring a joint response of all stakeholders.

I wish to point out that Serbia, just like EU Member States, seeks to build a society where the major assets are pluralism, tolerance, solidarity, fight against discrimination, rule of law and strengthening democratic institutions as a guarantee of promoting these assets. In this respect, the Republic of Serbia pays due attention to negotiations on Foreign, Security and Defence Policy, because it wants to assert itself as a relevant and responsible partner to the Union, and to contribute to the success of EU policies. Serbia is firmly committed to meeting numerous security challenges of the modern age, and to contribute, with other partners around the world, notably the EU, to warding off threats on regional, European and global levels. As a candidate country, Serbia is making its contribution to global efforts aimed at keeping the peace and stability, and it takes part in many EU actions as an equal actor.

Precisely for all these reasons, the Government of Serbia and the relevant Ministries will carefully analyse the European Union's new Global Strategy on Foreign and Security Policy, as well as their own framework in place – the Strategy of National Security and the Defence Strategy, both adopted in 2009, especially the segment of threats posed in our regional context, and take a stand on further steps and the way forward. Honestly, I believe that it is wrong to measure Serbia's contribution to the Common Foreign and Security Policy solely in accession percentages or to paint it black and white, which is an occasional occurrence – insisting that Serbia should and must pick one side or the other, because Serbia has already significantly contributed to CFSP by participating in many EU peace missions and through diversified relations with many partners and its role in the region. After all, it was also evidenced last year by our Chairmanship of the OSCE.

Our strategic priority, namely full membership of the European Union – is not questioned and has been reaffirmed on countless occasions in many political statements and adopted

documents.

Thank you for your attention."