



First Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Serbia Ivica Dacic met today Prime Minister of the Republic of Bulgaria Ognyan Gerdzhikov.

First Deputy Prime Minister Ivica Dacic, in his capacity as Envoy of the Prime Minister of Serbia Aleksandar Vucic, and the Prime Minister of Bulgaria, laid wreaths at the Vasil Levski Monument.

Earlier today, the two officials opened the 24th International Easter Festival Exhibition "World Children's Picture Contest".

On the occasion, Minister Dacic particularly underlined that it gave him pleasure to see how children of different nationalities gathered together in Bosilegrad, showing all the beauty of diversity and similarity of their peoples' traditions, through play and art. The Serbian Foreign Minister also wished that the tradition of holding this event be long-standing and successful.

### **Wreath-laying ceremony at the Vasil Levski Monument: Remarks by Minister Dacic**

"Your Excellency Mr. Prime Minister,

Dear residents of Bosilegrad,

Ladies and gentlemen,

We have gathered here today at the monument to Vasil Levski, a famous Bulgarian national hero, to pay homage to him and his work.

Not only are we gathering in his home country of Bulgaria, but we are also doing so in Belgrade, Dimitrovgrad and Bosilegrad. These gatherings are taking place on an annual basis, in February, as we are commemorating the anniversary of his death and remembering the liberal ideas of this revolutionary and liberation fighter from the Ottoman period.

Today, we are celebrating the link between those times and the part of our common history, where heroes like Levski occupy a dignified place. Justice and truth are the ones that always emerge victorious in textbooks, in the cultural and historical heritage and, of course, in monuments that keep alive the memory of all those who defended freedom and dignity.

Allow me, on this occasion, to recall that I had the honour and pleasure to unveil a monument to Vasil Levski in Dimitrovgrad, in February 2014, with my then counterpart, Prime Minister Plamen Oresharski.

Dear friends,

The freedom-loving aspirations of heroes such as Vasil Levski serve as a reminder not only of the price paid by our peoples in their struggle for freedom, but also of the values that the peoples of Serbia and Bulgaria share in common.

From this place, we recall that courage and devotion symbolize freedom, and that discord and violence breed violence. It is our duty to preserve peace and to build progress through good will, dialogue and mutual respect.

Therefore, it is important for us to cherish cooperation and fight for further development and prosperity of our states. To fight for a brighter future of our citizens and our children. I believe that we all have the obligation to hand down to our future generation better-regulated, more stable, more democratic and more tolerant societies.

Ladies and gentlemen,

The Republic of Serbia continues to strongly support strengthening of relations and full trust between states. I can note with pleasure that our bilateral relations are good, and that both sides are willing and ready to further promote them. By deepening cooperation in areas of mutual interest, I believe that we will contribute to the prosperity of our citizens, thus shaping a better future for our region, as we remain indebted to our heroes.

Thank you."