



First Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs Ivica Dacic received today the Ambassador of Israel to Belgrade, Ms. Alona Fisher Kamm, on the occasion of the preparations for the celebration of the 70th anniversary since the proclamation of the State of Israel and commemoration of the important centenary for the Serbs and the Jews when Serbia was the first country in the world to recognize the Balfour Declaration and call the future state by the name of "Israel" in 1917, acknowledging it as a path leading to the creation of the state of the Jewish people, as well as to the end of the Great War with a view to further intensifying the friendship and understanding between Serbia and Israel, to the benefit of both the Serbs and the Jews. Both Serbian and Israeli diplomacies remember the prominent diplomat Milenko Vesnic and Dr David Albala, the Serbian patriot and the Jewish leader who laid down the groundwork for the future State of Israel, thus creating unbreakable links between the Serbs and the Jews and making them immortal.

Minister Dacic emphasized that St. Sava was the first Serbian statesman and educationalist who visited Jerusalem in 1229. Serbia recognized civil rights of the Jewish people right after the Berlin Congress in 1878. King Alexander I Karadjordjevic regulated the position of the Jewish people by the Law on the Jewish Religious Communities in 1929. King Peter I and King Alexander I have their memorial woods in Israel. Grandparents of the founder of the Zionist movement and the President of the First Zionist Congress Theodor Herzl were born in Belgrade, Serbia.

Head of Serbian Diplomacy underlined that Serbia always supported and understood the Jewish people who selflessly gave their lives for the freedom of the Serbian people in the First and the Second Balkan Wars as well as in the First and the Second World Wars. In the national liberation ranks in the Second World War, the Jewish people lost 1188 warriors of whom 10 were proclaimed national heroes and 14 were army generals whom Serbia remembers and knows all their names that were given to some streets and institutions. Jewish courage and suffering in the struggle for liberation have consolidated their integration and reputation among the Serbian people, also witnessed by an impressive monument at the entrance to the Jewish cemetery in Belgrade.

This year marks the 70th anniversary since the establishment of the State of Israel. It has been a long and a thorny way. Serbia understands Israel as even nowadays Serbia faces serious challenges. Kosovo is Serbian Jerusalem.

Serbs and Jews must be visionaries today and must work together in order to further promote their relations. We owe it to our glorious forefathers.

At the end of the meeting, Minister Dacic handed to Ambassador Fisher a draft program of the celebration of great jubilees that Serbia wishes to mark in Jerusalem in mid-May, in honour of the Serbs and the Jews.