



Mr. Chairman,  
Excellencies,  
Dear friends,

It is my great honour to attend the Mid-Term Ministerial Conference of the Non-Aligned Movement and continue now the tradition of my participation on behalf of the Republic of Serbia in the Movement's meetings over the past years. I would like to express our gratitude to friendly Azerbaijan, our host country, for their warm hospitality and to congratulate them on excellent arrangements for this meeting.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

As one of the successor States of the former Yugoslavia, Serbia takes pride in emphasizing the role of the former SFRY in founding the Non-Aligned Movement, inheriting and striving to preserve and promote its relations with the NAM members by following in the footsteps of Josip Broz Tito, one of the Movement's founding fathers and a proven friend of many peoples and countries. Allow me to remind you that the First (formal) Conference of the NAM was held in Belgrade, and that Serbia had the honour to host the Commemorative Ministerial Meeting on the occasion of the Movement's 50th anniversary in September 2011.

The NAM's historic role was primarily to contribute to the preservation of peace and lessening the tensions resulting from the bloc rivalry in the Cold War era, as well as to defend the universal purposes and principles enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations. Moreover, it paved the way to the momentous processes such as decolonization which included the right of peoples to self-determination, fight against apartheid and enduring efforts towards the promotion of economic and social position of primarily underdeveloped and developing countries. The founding principles and erstwhile efforts of the Movement have not lost their relevance even today, particularly in terms of the need to strengthen multilateralism and the role of the UN in view of the fact that the present-day world is fraught with many challenges, uncertainties, multidimensional and interlinked crises and their consequences which require

search for a common and global response.

The Republic of Serbia is firmly committed to multilateralism as the best response to finding sustainable solutions. We support participation of states on an equal foot and a more inclusive global governance system, while demonstrating essential readiness to jointly engage in the spirit of constructiveness, compromise and flexibility in realizing a strategic vision of a better world for all of us. We deeply believe that this is the only approach leading to progress in an increasingly interdependent world. The purposes and principles of the United Nations, as defined in the Charter, remain equally relevant today and are becoming ever more important in the face of growing complexities.

Sovereign equality of States, refraining from threat or use of force, non-interference in internal affairs of other States, peaceful settlement of international disputes and respecting differences are starting premises whose validity has not been challenged by the 21st century changes on the international scene. We believe that the Movement's active role in advocating the respect of international law and the above principles, especially the principle of sovereignty, territorial integrity and non-interference in internal affairs of other States, is of particular importance. Guided by its priorities and readiness to make its contribution, the Republic of Serbia has all along emphasized that peaceful resolution of disputes and crises is one of the most important aspects in building and preserving international peace and security. In this context, we are of the view that strengthening the culture of peace and dialogue, policy of compromise and peaceful co-existence of peoples is of crucial importance. We trust that at the present time of complex conflicts and growing extremism we need to work together to bring about conditions for sustainable peace, primarily in the fields of institution-building, strengthening democracy, promotion and respect of human rights and the rule of law.

The Republic of Serbia has been reaffirming its foreign policy priorities through active and constructive participation in all forms of multilateral cooperation. Through its participation in the activities of the Non-Aligned Movement and engagement in international organizations in general, Serbia seeks to make its contribution and demonstrate its commitment to the creation of stability and trust in the international community, development of friendly relations based on the respect of equal rights and cooperation built upon solidarity of countries and peoples. In that regard, we believe that the efforts of the Movement are of great importance in terms of democratization of international relations, resolution of problems of a political, economic, social, cultural or humanitarian nature while promoting observance of human rights for all, regardless of race, gender, language or religion. I would like to underline in particular the importance of the continued role in the struggle for equality of countries as well as in promoting different needs of Member States at international level, especially in terms of social and economic challenges whereby the Non-Aligned Movement has become a true advocate of developing countries.

Historic agreement and adoption of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development as a comprehensive vision of global development represents an outstanding opportunity to ensure a better future for succeeding generations, primarily towards eradicating poverty and hunger, ensuring inclusive education and affordable health-care, reducing growing inequalities within and among the States as well as closing the existing gap between the North and the South. The Movement shares that vision and you can always count on Serbia in that respect.

Dear friends,

I would like to take this opportunity to express deep gratitude to the many members of the Movement that have not recognized unilaterally declared independence of "Kosovo" and by respecting the territorial integrity and sovereignty of the Republic of Serbia, remained committed to the principles of international law, Charter of the United Nations as well as to UNSC resolution 1244 (1999). In doing so, you have sent a principled and powerful message in favour of respect of the rule of law in international framework.

By defending its sovereignty and territorial integrity, Serbia is defending not only international law, but the highest authority of the UN Security Council in maintaining international peace and security. I wish to recall that it has been a decade now that Serbia has been devotedly and responsibly warning the international community of the apparent danger of unilateral steps being taken, indicating that the unilateral declaration of independence of "Kosovo" constitutes a highly dangerous and unacceptable precedent which, as we have witnessed, has given an impetus to other separatist and secessionist movements worldwide. We believe that unilateralism only leads to the deepening of crises, instability and further divisions. Kosovo and Metohija continues to be fraught with numerous challenges and a highly complex political and security situation, as witnessed by the most recent developments of 26 March in which the Director of the Office of the Government of the Republic of Serbia and chief negotiator in the dialogue between Belgrade and Pristina, Marko Djuric, was beaten and arrested in a brutal action of the Kosovo police special units, and in which a total of 36 Serbs were injured. This testifies to the gravity of the situation of the Serb and other non-Albanian peoples, who are the subject of freedom-of-movement restrictions, continued intimidation and attempts at forcible expulsion of Serbs, lack of conditions for exercising their fundamental rights, jeopardizing Serbian historical, cultural and religious heritage, while the exercise of the right to return by those who have left their homes in Kosovo and Metohija is almost impossible. Despite the double standards applied to Serbs by the international community, we believe that we must remain consistent in our endeavours to resolve the Kosovo and Metohija issue, peacefully and through dialogue, in order to find a compromise solution and reach a historic agreement with the Albanian community in Kosovo and Metohija. Such solution must respect Serbia's interests and the needs of the Serbian community in Kosovo and Metohija.

We are aware of how delicate it is today for those siding with Serbia in its legitimate fight to preserve its territorial integrity and defend the principles of the United Nations Charter. We are also aware that many of you are exposed to different pressures to recognize the unilateral declaration of independence of "Kosovo". Therefore, I would like to take this opportunity to appeal to you, once again, to remain consistent in defending the norms of the international legal order and abide by the position of non-recognition, and continue to oppose the unilateral attempts of so-called Kosovo at affirming its aspirations to membership of international organizations.

The Republic of Serbia firmly upholds the view that states, which share common values and are committed to the respect of the international legal order, should enhance their cooperation and assist each other in international fora. We are strongly tied by the bonds of close principled positions aimed at preservation of the territorial integrity of all internationally recognized countries, UN Member States, and the need for respecting international law. In this context, we welcome the decisions of Non-Aligned Movement member countries, Burundi and Suriname, to

revoke their recognitions, and expect other states that have earlier recognized the unilateral declaration of independence of "Kosovo" to follow suit, in the period ahead.

We also welcome the fact that the Final Document of this year's Ministerial Conference of the Non-Aligned Movement has reaffirmed that members of the Movement will respect the territorial integrity, sovereignty, political independence and inviolability of borders of its Member States.

Distinguished colleagues,

May I remind you that the Government of the Republic of Serbia has been successfully implementing the "World in Serbia" project, ever since 2010, as a particular contribution and impetus to the strengthening of relations with the members of the Movement. We are committed to continue to pursue the scholarship programme for youth from the Movement's member and observer countries, in order to further reinforce the ties between our peoples and contribute to a better future for all. On the bilateral level, our policy is characterized by strong commitment to the further development of cooperation in the areas of mutual interest, particularly in the economic, military, cultural and educational spheres.

Dear Friends,

Looking forward - with best wishes – to the future of our countries and peoples, promotion of our common principles and values, I would like to assure you that you may always count on the sincere friendship, benevolence, my personal support and the partnership of Serbia.

Thank you for your attention and understanding.