First Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Serbia Ivica Dacic met today in Sochi with Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation Sergey Lavrov.

"It is my great pleasure to meet with my counterpart and friend Sergey Lavrov. We are pleased to be able to reaffirm that the relations between Serbia and the Russian Federation are at a very high level and that they are strategic partner relations. This is also reflected in the fact that we shall be celebrating a significant anniversary this year – 180 years since the establishment of diplomatic relations.

I would like to thank President Putin and Minister Lavrov for their unreserved support to the interests of Serbia. Had it not been for Russian support, we would not have been able to defend our national interests and territorial integrity. For its part, Serbia has reciprocated by not aligning itself with the sanctions against Russia and its people, nor will it do so in the future.

The support of Russia is important to us, and in this context, President Vucic and I keep the Russian leadership informed about the course of the dialogue with Pristina.

As Sergey said, the Albanian side has fulfilled none of the agreements made. It is our wish to reach a compromise and an agreement, but apparently double standards have been applied, particularly by the West, which let Pristina off the hook when it comes to its commitments.

As the dialogue continues, we will further maintain close contacts with the Russian Federation because we believe that no solution can be found unless supported by Russia.

There has been a change in some Western countries which now allow for a compromise solution to be discussed at all, while before they used to say that this issue had been resolved.

We have been preparing for the visit by President Putin – an event of an overriding importance to us, to be preceded by a session of the Joint Committee on Cooperation.

We are able to contact, inform and reach each other at any moment, and this is proof and a demonstration of a great friendship fostered between us", the Serbian Foreign Minister said at a

joint press conference.

The Russian Foreign Minister noted that the Kosovo Albanians had for years failed to honour the EU-facilitated agreements with Serbia, adding that the EU needed to use its influence on Kosovo.

"We can see the constructive approach adopted by Belgrade in the EU-facilitated talks with Pristina. However, the same cannot be said about the approach of Kosovo Albanians. They have failed to fulfil what was agreed many years ago", Lavrov underlined.
Minister Lavrov emphasized that preparations were underway for the visit by Russian President Vladimir Putin to Serbia.

"Serbian President Aleksandar Vucic invited Russian President Vladimir Putin to visit Serbia. Preparations for this meeting are now going on", Lavrov stressed.