



First Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Serbia Ivica Dacic is today in Yerevan to take part in the 17th Summit of the Heads of State and Government of the International Organization of La Francophonie (IOF).

As the first day of the Summit of La Francophonie was brought to an end, Serbia was granted the status of an IOF Associate Member at this major multilateral event gathering approximately eighty states, including permanent members, associate members and observers.

"At the meeting of the permanent membership of La Francophonie, Serbia was granted the status of an Associate Member. It was decided by unanimity, meaning that all of the IOF permanent members totalling over 50, voted in favour.

Without a doubt, this is yet another step forward as we continue to promote our status, and a step forward in the development of cooperation in the framework of this important multilateral organization.

Naturally, I used the event as an opportunity for a number of bilateral meetings with many countries to discuss topics that are vital to Serbia, such as the issue of Kosovo.

As for the representatives of Kosovo who are also in attendance here, who received an observer status in the Organization 4 or 5 years or so ago and an associate member status this year, and them hailing this as a great diplomatic victory, I have to underline that membership of this Organization is not reserved for states only. For example, one Louisiana has also been granted a certain status today, whereas two or three Canadian regions are also members of La Francophonie, as are some Belgian provinces, etc. An associate member status can either be given to states or regions that so desire. In this context, thirteen permanent members tabled a declaration, i.e., a so-called interpretative statement concerning Kosovo's request, which states that granting an associate membership to Kosovo does not imply that it is being recognized as a state, and that their position on Kosovo remains unaltered.

In the talks we had with representatives of other states, we have reached significant agreements concerning the issue that is fundamental to us, namely that of the territorial integrity, and these states have a profound understanding of Serbia's position. Unsurprisingly, a large number of these countries recognized Kosovo in the past ten years and we have been discussing with them their potential revocation of such recognition, and these talks have been successful.

However, in order to be able to fully deliver in this regard, I will not disclose who our collocutors were. Many countries whom with we also had talks in New York are also present at this event, and our activities continue. As I already said, it is our expectation that the number of states that recognized Kosovo will drop below one hundred before the New Year, that is, in a few months from now", concluded Minister Dacic.