



First Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs Ivica Dacic attended today in Strasbourg the ceremony marking the 15th anniversary since the admission of the Republic of Serbia to the Council of Europe.

"The Council of Europe is one of the oldest and the only international organization bringing together all countries of Europe. In that context, 15 years later, one can note that we had huge benefit from the CoE membership, primarily with regard to the harmonization of our legislation, implementation and endorsement of different conventions, expertise in the area of human rights protection, rule of law and democracy, in the broadest sense of the word. The very citizens had benefited from the membership because of the competence of the European Court of Human Rights.

Following the assassination of Prime Minister Djindjic, Serbia obtained CoE membership with a view to consolidating democracy in Serbia and I believe that huge progress was made, particularly in recent years.

I had talks with CoE Secretary General Thorbjorn Jagland who appreciated very much the contribution of Serbia to the stabilization of the situation in the region.

I informed him about the ongoing dialogue with Pristina. The dialogue is very important for peaceful way of solving the outstanding issues. Mr. Jagland said that there were two problematic issues, Brexit, as regards the EU, and possible exit of Russia from the CoE. Serbia supports the efforts that Secretary General Jagland invested in finding a solution that would enable participation of all and survival of the CoE as the key pillar of the European institutional architecture.

We believe that admission of "Kosovo" to the CoE would constitute a direct violation of international legal order and of all statutory norms of the CoE and we oppose it. We hold the view that any kind of admission of "Kosovo" prior the institutional end of dialogue between Belgrade and Pristina would pose a serious peril of the destabilization of the entire region.

One can see that the representatives of Pristina live in some kind of a world of their own and that they do not understand the reality around them. Most of international factors do apprehend that a compromise needs to be found. Also, Pristina keeps on saying that over 116 countries recognized "Kosovo". I returned from Lesotho last night which revoked its recognition of "Kosovo". Seven countries revoked their recognitions this year. By the end of the year the number will come down to less than 100.

Arguments of Pristina do not meet international support any longer and that is why I believe that Kosovo has no chance to be admitted to Interpol, bearing in mind that a huge number of countries changed their positions. It would be much better for them to stick to dialogue than to keep on trying in this kind of way to obtain membership of different international institutions", the Head of Serbian diplomacy stated at a press conference.