



First Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs Ivica Dacic paid a visit to Vienna today where he met Austrian Vice-Chancellor Heinz Christian Strache.

"I would like to express great pleasure over my visit and talks with my colleague and friend Strache.

The relations between our two countries are on the continued ascending line. There is an exchange of visits on top level. Vice-Chancellor Strache visited Belgrade in February, the President of Austria completed his visit to Serbia yesterday and we are expecting the Chancellor's visit. Next year we will mark 145th anniversary of the establishment of our diplomatic relations and we expect Foreign Minister Kneissl to pay a visit.

We wish our cooperation to be comprehensive and I voice pleasure at the development of our bilateral relations.

Austria is one of the most important trading partners of Serbia. There is around 1,000 companies owned by Austrian nationals or legal entities from the territory of Austria that employ several tens of thousands of workers in Serbia. Our commercial exchange amounted to almost a billion euro last year. We expect economic cooperation to further develop.

I would like to thank Austria for the support it offers concerning our European integration path. We are aware of the importance of the European integration process and of the harmonization of our system with EU standards and values in that regard, which is also significant for the reform of society as a whole.

Austria is one of the countries offering greatest support to Serbia on its path towards the EU. Also, I would like to thank Austria for taking the initiative, in its capacity as the current EU Presidency, for opening as many chapters as possible.

Signing of the Memorandum on Cooperation between the Academy for Public Administration of

the Republic of Serbia and the Federal Academy for Public Administration of the Republic of Austria, is a very important event on the agenda today.

There are no outstanding issues with Austria except for different interpretation of the issue of Kosovo. Serbia is interested in solving all regional outstanding issues. Serbia is advocating regional stability, peace and reconciliation. Solving of outstanding issues can be acceptable only if interests of all sides are respected.

We stand ready to make understandings and to conduct dialogue with Pristina. We expect EU, facilitating the dialogue, to put additional pressure to implement what has already been agreed upon and signed 5 years ago. Recently, it was 2,000 days since the Community of Serbian Municipalities was not established. We deem this issue to be a very important one as this was the condition on the basis of which we have signed the Brussels Agreement. It is clear that this issue cannot be resolved without respecting mutual interests but also without respecting individual interests both of the Serbian and Albanian peoples.

We wish to play an active role but without readiness to find a compromise and without respect for the interest of the Serbian people living in Kosovo and Metohija, Serbia will not give in to a pressure of solving the Kosovo status issue on the basis of unilateral acts passed by Pristina in the previous period.

We ask all our friends to keep in mind this position of Serbia and to give a chance to dialogue and reaching of a peaceful, compromise solution.

Pristina keeps on making unilateral acts such as yesterday's decision to start transformation, i.e. formation of the army of Kosovo. This is in contravention of all resolutions of international organizations such as the UNSC Resolution 1244.

We hold the view that prior to reaching agreement these issues need to be on the agenda.

The position of Austria is very important as regards issues of Interpol, UNESCO and other international organizations Kosovo is trying to obtain the membership of and use it for the promotion of its statehood.

I am very satisfied with the talks I had with Mr. Strache. The visit was another step forward towards further promotion of our friendly relations", the Head of Serbian Diplomacy said at a joint press conference following the meeting.