



Speech delivered by FDP/MFA Ivica Dacic following the Eucharistic celebration mass for peace, reconciliation and justice among nations at the Church of the Assumption of Our Blessed Virgin Mary:

"It is my great honour to attend at the invitation of the Archbishop of Belgrade, Monsignor Stanislav Hocevar, in the presence of Cardinal Christoph Schönborn, and the Ambassadors of Austria and Hungary, joint commemoration of one hundred years since the end of the First World War in this holy place.

I am proud that we have today, by extending a hand, paid tribute to all victims of the Great War and reminded ourselves that the only common way for us is that of understanding and forgiveness.

I am deeply convinced that we shall endeavour to preserve peace and stability through our concerted efforts in the future, like we succeeded in overcoming the differences of that period and putting them behind us over time.

The historic meeting of the Heads of our two Churches in Havana in 2016 proves that Catholics and the Orthodox have never been so close. The Holy See has so far voiced its concern for the fate of the Christian religious and cultural heritage in Kosovo and Metohija, expressing at the same time proper responsibility and support for the Serbian Orthodox Church.

World War I was a cataclysm on a European and world scale. Because of massive human losses and devastation unprecedented until that time, it is extremely important to foster on a continuous basis and anew the culture of remembrance of the Great War. In the collective memory of Serbs it is a time of suffering, victory, liberation and unification all South Slavs. However, that liberty was dearly paid with huge casualties. There are very few families in today's Serbia that have not lost someone in WWI.

Today, viewed from that perspective, we have all been defeated. That was a war waged against all our nations whom we represent. The Great War has not only left an ineffaceable mark upon individuals but on all segments of the population as well, and all nations from then on defined time as pre- and post-war period. In the 1920s and 30s, throughout Europe and the world

memorials were erected to remind the living of the glory and tribulations of the Great War.

The Second World War has surpassed it by its horrors and temporarily faded it into oblivion. It is estimated that Serbia lost nearly a third of its total population in WWI. On 11 November 1918 when Armistice was signed, the world was poorer from more than 15 million dead soldiers and civilians. With this solemn liturgy we are paying tribute to them and celebrate peace and reconciliation among nations for which they have laid their lives.

In the spirit of the end of the conflict we celebrate today, I will quote the words of the Head of the Roman Catholic Church, Pope Francis: "Every time we put our prejudices behind us and summon courage to forge new brotherly ties, we recognize the resurrection of Christ".

And may it never be repeated again."