



Statement by First Deputy Prime Minister/Minister of Foreign Affairs of Serbia Ivica Dacic at the meeting of the Security Council of the United Nations which discussed the report of the Secretary General of the United Nations on the work of UNMIK:

Mr. President,

Distinguished Members of the Security Council,

At the beginning, let me thank Secretary-General Guterres and his Special Representative Tanin for their Reports. I also thank them for their dedication and hard work on the implementation of the mandate of the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK) under UNSCR 1244 (1999). I commend China for including, in line with the established dynamics, this meeting in the agenda of the Security Council, as well as the Council members who support a continued consideration of this question.

In August, we had no regular meeting on UNMIK; I cannot but express my displeasure at the decision of the United Kingdom not to include this item in the programme of work of the Security Council with an explanation that the situation in Kosovo and Metohija was calm and that nothing was happening on the ground. I take this opportunity to point out why this approach is wrong and why we consider that it is important at this moment that this topic remain high on the Council's agenda. We spent more than three hours, the time it usually takes to hold a Security Council meeting, discussing if it was necessary to convene the meeting or not. An unnecessary bad atmosphere between Belgrade and Priština was created, as well as a division among the Security Council members. The adoption of the programme of work of the Security Council was put in question, a situation certainly harmful both for the solution of this issue and for the tone prevalent in this body.

The membership of the Security Council, let me recall, is a great privilege, as well as great responsibility and its Members must do their best to safeguard international peace and security. For years, the United Nations and its Member States have spared no effort and time working on preventing conflicts and we are all called upon to do what it takes to forestall, at the first sign, that instability metamorphose into a conflict. In this case we are faced with a situation in which a semi-resolved problem is neglected. The conflict is far behind us, but we are just as far away from a stable and safe situation that no longer merits the attention of this body. To allege that this topic is 'less important' at the time when extensive efforts are being made to find a durable

and sustainable solution with great support by important actors in the international community is counterproductive, to say the least.

We continue to believe that agreement should be reached among Council Members on how often this topic should be considered in the Security Council and that the question of frequency is not a technical matter. I recall that Serbia tried hard to make a contribution to achieving a solution by agreement and we are ready to continue to discuss this question with all interested parties in the same constructive spirit.

Mr. President,

It is with regret that I note that no substantive, positive changes have taken place since the last meeting of the Security Council: the Community of Serbian Municipalities, the cornerstone of the Brussels Agreement, has not been formed for more than 2 000 days now; no conditions have been created for the return of 200 000 internally displaced persons (IDPs); the Specialist Chambers have not begun work; while almost a year since the murder of Oliver Ivanović, the perpetrator of this heinous crime has not been found. Nothing of this has happened, Mr. President. And what has, one would be hard-pressed to say that it has been positive: resolutions of this esteemed body have been grossly violated and new provocations and new incidents occurred. Let me mention just a few:

- The so-called Assembly of Kosovo adopted Laws that will make it possible, for all practical purposes, that the 'Kosovo Security Force' transform into armed forces. Constant calls for caution by the international community and the disregard for the interests of the Serbian community in Kosovo and Metohija notwithstanding, the authorities in Priština are resolved to form the armed forces. Serbia is categorically opposed to these unilateral acts, for it is evident that these forces would have all the attributes and competencies of a military irrespective of what they might be named. Let me recall that, under UNSCR 1244 (1999) and the Military-Technical Agreement, KFOR is the only legal military formation in Kosovo and Metohija; it is, at the same time, an important guarantor of the implementation of the Brussels Agreement and, practically, the only guarantor of the security and survival of the Serbs, their property and their religious and cultural heritage. Let me point out that it is unacceptable that radical, far-reaching and unilateral decisions be taken at the time when the dialogue is being conducted, aimed at finding a solution, and I expect the Security Council Members to condemn this wanton decision of Priština.

- During his visit to Kosovo and Metohija on 8 and 9 September, Serbian President Aleksandar Vučić was prevented from visiting the locality of Banje in a Serbian enclave because the Priština authorities changed their initial decision at the last moment regardless of his clear message of peace and his calls for a sustainable solution for Kosovo and Metohija.

- The raid by the special police forces of Lake Gazivode was the most drastic example of provocation. Sixty members of the special ROSU units, wearing balaclavas and wielding long-barrel guns, descended on the Gazivode lake and hydro-electric plant in northern Kosovo and Metohija to enable Hashim Thaçi to make a visit. I am afraid the only goal of this irrational action was to provoke and intimidate the Serbian people in Kosovo and Metohija, and not for the first time. This, too, let me point out, was a clear violation of UNSCR 1244 (1999) and the Brussels Agreement. As the Prime Minister of Serbia, I personally attended, along with Baroness Ashton, Hashim Thaçi and Aleksandar Vučić, a NATO meeting at the time of the

signing of the Brussels Agreement in 2013, at which agreement was reached that no Kosovo security force may come to the north unless two conditions have been fulfilled: one, advice to KFOR and, two, consent by representatives of the Serbian municipalities in northern Kosovo and Metohija. None of the two, Mr. President, materialized. We consider that the KFOR and EU reactions were inadequate and, to say the least, incongruous with their role and mandate. Escalation was avoided thanks to the calm of our side, the messages of the President of Serbia and the restraint of the Serbs in northern Kosovo and Metohija. Although alarmed, they demonstrated maturity and did not swallow the bait. The message sent by the Gazivode incident, though, is of particular concern. The lake and the hydro-electric plant are strategically important both for us and the Priština side. Yet, Priština is not ready to discuss substantive issues. The recent attempt to interfere with the work of Elektromreža Srbije (Serbia's power transmission network) and the intention of Priština to take over the energy infrastructure in northern Kosovo and Metohija are also indicative in this regard. Let me remind you that energy is a subject-matter of the Brussels dialogue and that we have expressed our concern on a number of occasions at Priština's steps that threaten the energy stability of the entire region taken despite its failure to fulfil the obligations regarding registration of two energy companies in northern Kosovo and Metohija.

The following developments also took place within the two previous reporting periods:

- The Priština authorities decided to build a road through the Special Protected Zone of the Dečani Monastery, built in the fourteenth century and included in UNESCO's World Heritage List, and sent bulldozers to its 'courtyard'. I take this opportunity to thank international representatives who prevented this uncanny action by their timely intervention; and
- Attacks on Serbs and their property occurred once again, including on those en route to the graveyards of their relatives, as well as on children in a playground. Unlike the Report of the Secretary-General, the OSCE Mission in Kosovo registered, in its recent report, 173 incidents related to the members of non-Albanian communities in the January-June 2018 period alone; it says that the overall number of incidents rose almost by 20 per cent compared to previous 6 months.

These are only some of the incidents that threaten the security in Kosovo and Metohija and burden its already complex situation. I have to admit that I do not understand how this situation can be characterized as stable by anybody. Or perhaps a 'stable situation' implies that Serbs are fair game, that attacks on them are normal, that they did and will occur and that they do not merit attention and response.

Many of these attacks are directed at IDPs and returnees. How are we to expect that even a modicum of progress will take place in the process of IDP returns if, in the Europe of the twenty-first century, we continue to speak that the security situation is still the biggest challenge as the returnees continue to be targets of ethnically motivated attacks? Arbitrary arrests, i.e. arrests of returnees on trumped-up charges, physical assaults and injuries, stoning of the faithful and assaults on priests, destruction of property, disconcerting graffiti, desecration of memorial plaques, national and religious hatred, provocations, institutional discrimination, no rule of law and independent judiciary, long procedures, inadequate protection of evidence and witnesses, failure to enforce court decisions etc. are the obstacles encountered these days by

those attempting to return home. The last Report of the Secretary-General failed to mention about 200 000 IDPs who, even 19 years after, have not realized their rights because of these unacceptable practices.

The assertions regarding stability are surely undercut also by the number of foreign terrorist fighters from Kosovo at which concern has been expressed by the Secretary-General in his Report as well. The reports that one group planned to carry out terrorist attacks in Serbian majority communities and on KFOR are particularly alarming.

Another important and sensitive topic, Mr. President, is the question of sexual violence in conflicts. Serbia condemns most strongly this horrific act of violence and considers that all perpetrators must be punished and that victims should be rendered proper protection and help. The number of victims of sexual violence in conflicts does not diminish the dreadful effect of this type of violence on each individual victim, just as speculation about numbers does not help justice, leads to politicization and slows down the process of reconciliation in post-conflict societies. The information contained in the Report and based on the data of the Commission for the Verification and Recognition of Sexual Violence Victim Status in Kosovo according to which, out of 782, 137 complaints have been accepted, are indicative of the years-long practice of Priština to present falsehoods to this august body, invoking, all along, the World Health Organization even though this Organization does not possess these data at all. We have been listening at these meetings repeatedly to the allegations of the existence of 20 000 victims of sexual violence, whereby attempts were made to establish a 'hierarchy of victims' on the basis of ethnic, religious or other belongings. As if the Serbian victims are 'less important', as if sexual violence against Serbian nationals was justified and unpunishable. In this atmosphere of the justification of crimes against Serbs it was possible for the so-called Government of Kosovo to nominate Fatmir Limaj as chief of the negotiating team in the dialogue with Belgrade. A commander of the Kosovo Liberation Army, he raped and killed, according to the testimony of Albanians themselves, the Mazreku brothers, witnesses and accomplices in the crime, a number of Serbian women in the village of Klečka. Serbia considers, and I repeat, that these issues must be addressed without politicization and with respect for each and every victim.

Mr. President,

I cannot but bring up on this occasion the letter addressed to the Secretary-General by the departing United States Ambassador to the United Nations, urging him to initiate a strategic review of UNMIK and develop an exit strategy from Kosovo. We have heard at these meetings on a number of times that UNMIK has fulfilled its mandate and that it is no longer needed with an explanation that the so-called Kosovo has built democratic institutions and that the rule of law and human rights are being respected. I have to ask of all those who put forward these arguments again:

- Is it acceptable for you that democratic institutions do not carry out agreements and obligations that have been assumed?
- Is it democracy for you that teargas grenades are lobbed in Parliament, which we have been seeing in Priština for years now?
- Is it a rule of law for you that, every now and then, Priština pardons the criminals

sentenced for most heinous criminal offences, including the members of the Drenica Group?

- Can intimidation of returnees, attacks on members of minority communities and their everyday discrimination be accepted as a normal state of affairs?
- Has the desired standard of respect for human rights been achieved by the return of 1.9 per cent of IDPs? Is it a sufficient number to give up on further returns? Does that mean that the expulsion of 200 000 Serbs is done and dusted? Are we supposed not to mention it any more?
- Whatever happened to over 1 500 missing Serbs?

For some, Ladies and Gentlemen, this is an uncomfortable, yet undeniable truth. Almost all of you sitting at this table support the international presence in Bosnia and Herzegovina where the general situation is incomparable and where the security of citizens, you will agree, is not threatened. How come the international presence is needed in Bosnia and Herzegovina and is not in Kosovo and Metohija? I can agree that the situation in Kosovo is significantly different than it was in 1999 or 2009, but the Mission is different from what it used to be at that time. To allege, however, that the Mission is not needed and that it has fulfilled its purpose is far from reality. Considering that this esteemed body is responsible for the UNMIK mandate, I would like to ask on this occasion whether and what the Secretary-General replied to Ambassador Haley.

Distinguished Members of the Security Council,

Some of you are of the opinion that the status of Kosovo is a finished story; at the same time, many consider that it is not. Many States are now reconsidering their decision to recognize the UDI of Kosovo and, so far, 10 States have changed such decisions. They realized that they had not been sufficiently informed of the situation and that it is necessary to give dialogue a chance. This number could rise considerably soon and the number of those who have recognized the UDI of Kosovo could fall below one half of the United Nations membership. Decisions to withdraw recognition are condemned by Priština and some States, whereas Serbia's solicitations are disqualified as provocations. Conversely, Priština's lobbying for new recognitions is for them a legitimate exercise, not a provocation. For them, calls to disrespect the sovereignty and territorial integrity of a full-fledged Member State of the United Nations heard from some countries sitting at this table are not a provocation, either. Ergo, you can lobby countries to recognize Kosovo, whereas Serbia may not call on countries to withdraw the recognition. It looks like something is very wrong in this reasoning. In a manner of a desperado, Priština hiked its tariffs by 10 per cent on goods from Serbia last week to punish my country for perceived improprieties in the conduct of its foreign-policy. It did so in breach of the rules and regulations of CEFTA that it currently chairs and had it strongly condemned by all international actors, including the European Union. Even Hashim Thaçi himself is in disagreement with this decision of Priština authorities.

Instead on dialogue, Priština has been focused on attempts to become a member of international organizations in a mistaken belief that it will thus prove its statehood, refusing to accept that these attempts are disruptive of any solution whatsoever. Its requests' lack of grounding, though, and their inconsistency with the basic principles of international law are conducive to the politicization of these organizations, their divisions and unnecessary waste of

energy. In that connection, let me present one self-evident example: the request of so-called Kosovo to become a member of INTERPOL. The argument that Priština often has recourse to is that it cannot cooperate with INTERPOL because it is not a member. This falsehood is laid bare by the assertion in the Report of the Secretary-General to the effect that UNMIK continues to secure communication between the PISG in Priština and INTERPOL as a matter of its regular activity. Under the Memorandum of Understanding between INTERPOL and UNMIK, this cooperation has gone on for more than 15 years now. In fact, Priština's campaign, aided and abetted by some States, to present so-called Kosovo's membership in INTERPOL as a question of security and the fight against crime is unsubstantiated and insupportable. It is quite obvious that there are political aspirations involved and I call on INTERPOL members not to support this request of Priština.

Mr. President,

The circumstances may have made the thrust of my Statement sound sombre and negative, but I would like to conclude it on a positive note. At the recent Security Council open debate on strengthening multilateralism, the European Union pointed out, *inter alia*, that "we have learnt that sustainable peace always requires a negotiated political solution". Serbia could not agree more and is earnestly interested in achieving compromise on the question of Kosovo and Metohija.

We are committed to finding a mutually acceptable solution. Such a solution cannot be found without agreement between Belgrade and Priština, just as it is not possible without your support. To that end, I call on you all over again to help this process and use the momentum to make a step forward. Divisions in the Security Council on this issue and discussions as to whether we need UNMIK or not are certainly not contributive. The answer as to whether we need Security Council meetings and UNMIK will be provided once we find a mutually acceptable solution. Until that time, we have UNSCR 1244 (1999), adopted by this esteemed body, that we all must honour. For its part, Serbia will invest maximum efforts to continue the dialogue and to arrive at a lasting solution, respectful of the interests of both the Serbian and Albanian peoples. Let us address ourselves to the quest of compromise for the future, for a lasting peace between Serbs and Albanians, for the prosperity of both Serbs and Albanians, for peace and stability in the entire region. Once it happens, we shall need neither UNMIK nor Security Council meeting.

In the end, let me recall that these days we are marking 100 years since the end of World War One in which Serbia fought on the side of the Allies. Serbia paid for the great victory by enormous sacrifices. According to the data of the 1919 Paris Peace Conference, Serbia lost 1 247 435 of its people, i.e. 28 per cent of the overall population and 62 per cent of the male population 18 to 55 years old. Of those who lost their lives 845 000 were civilians. Almost each 10th victim killed in World War One was a Serb. In recognition of the victims, the then United States President, Woodrow Wilson, decided to fly the Serbian flag on the White House and all public institutions in the United States. This happened only one more time in the history of the United States, with the French flag included a few years later. That's why regional peace and stability are a primary interest of Serbia. Lest the victims are forgotten and lest war ever happen again.

Thank you.

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