



Statement by the First Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs, Ivica Dacic, at a ceremony on the occasion of the transfer of the contact point Embassy for cooperation with NATO from the Embassy of the Hellenic Republic to the Norwegian Embassy:

"Dear General Marinelli,
Distinguished General Portolano,
Your Excellencies,
Ladies and gentlemen,

I would like to thank you for the invitation to participate in today's ceremony for the transfer of the contact point Embassy for the cooperation of Serbia with NATO from the Embassy of Greece to the Embassy of Norway. I note with pleasure the excellent cooperation we had throughout the past two years with the Embassy of Greece in the promotion of Serbia's partner cooperation with NATO. I have no doubt that the cooperation will continue to be promoted in mutual interest in 2019 as well, with the support of Norway, a country with which Serbia has excellent political and economic relations as well as with the Netherlands, our important partner whose Embassy will, as announced, in agreement with Norway, take on the role in 2020.

In the development of partner cooperation I would like to emphasize this time again an important role played by the NATO Secretary General, Mr. Stoltenberg, former Norwegian Prime Minister and a proven friend of Serbia and our region, who lived in Belgrade at one point. Continued contacts between President Vucic and Secretary General Stoltenberg over the past four years largely contributed to the promotion of political dialogue and building of mutual trust and understanding. High and the highest level visits are exchanged every year and we had the honor to host Mr. Stoltenberg in early October 2018 for the opening of exercise "Serbia 2018", so far the biggest emergency response field exercise with 2,000 participants coming from 40 NATO member countries and partners.

Serbia and NATO have significantly improved their practical cooperation in all areas of common interest, whether civil or military. Following the successful conclusion of the first cycle of the Individual Partnership Action Plan (IPAP), activities are underway to finalize a new IPAP for the next three-year period. At the same time, Serbia's military neutrality is not at stake at any moment – it remains our lasting decision fully respected by our NATO partners. Serbia respects

the decision of its neighbors and other countries to join NATO, which is why in turn we expect understanding for our cooperation with the countries which are non-NATO Members. Our cooperation with other partners, as demonstrated in practice, is not to the detriment of level and quality of our NATO PfP cooperation and its member countries and vice versa. Serbia is surrounded by both NATO member countries and NATO aspirant countries and its geographic proximity to them implies that we naturally need to cooperate with them.

This interdependence is a reason why our country is committed to the promotion of regional cooperation in all areas, as one of our key foreign policy priorities. We seek to resolve all outstanding questions through dialogue, focusing on the future and promotion of peace and stability as a major prerequisite for any kind of progress.

Serbia and NATO are linked by common interest towards the preservation of peace and stability in the region. Serbia-NATO relationship is burdened with the baggage of the past, which you are all aware of and that is a fact – it concerns NATO air strikes against the former FR of Yugoslavia without the authorization of the UN Security Council, which resulted in a heavy loss of civilian life and extensive destruction. However, as for our relations, it is our responsibility and obligation to jointly help build a stable region and thus provide an essential basis for its prosperity and contribute to peace and stability beyond the region, which is our joint mission that should be accomplished.

Therefore, we expect the Alliance to demonstrate understanding in perceiving, appreciating and supporting our priorities particularly regarding Kosovo and Metohija since NATO, inter alia, has a number of obligations under its UNSC mandate in terms of preservation of peace and stability in Kosovo and Metohija. We are of the view that only a compromise solution to Kosovo and Metohija can ensure lasting peace and security and we have repeatedly demonstrated our readiness to reach such solutions. The agreement between Belgrade and Pristina will not be to the detriment of any third party and there is no reason whatsoever that what the two parties find acceptable should not be acceptable to others. We believe that the time has come to resolve this issue in a way that no party should get it all but would still get enough to make the solution lasting and sustainable.

NATO's KFOR mission remains the only legal and legitimate military formation in Pristina, a key guarantee of the implementation of the Brussels agreement and practically the sole guarantee of security and survival of Serbs, their property, religious and cultural heritage in Kosovo and Metohija. That is why it is extremely important to us that the KFOR mandate be implemented in full compliance with UNSC Resolution 1244 (1999) and the Military-Technical Agreement, without downsizing it and keeping it status-neutral.

On this occasion as well, I would like to emphasize that Serbia is vehemently opposed to the transformation of the so-called "Kosovo Security Forces" into the so-called "Army of Kosovo" since it is in violation of UNSC Resolution 1244 (1999), Military-Technical Agreement and threatens regional and wider security. Unfortunately, developments demonstrate that Pristina obviously has no intention of giving up unilateral acts, such as those which led to the establishment of armed forces despite clear warnings of the international community and Mr. Stoltenberg himself to the effect that such unilateral actions are unacceptable and undermine

the dialogue. I would also like to point to the essential importance of NATO guarantees that "Kosovo Security Force" and other armed Albanian formations cannot enter the northern part of the Province without KFOR Commander's authorization and that of the Serbian leaders in the north. Serbia has always taken a responsible and restrained position seeking to strengthen and promote peace and security, being at the same time committed to the protection of its state and national interests, which is a fundamental right and obligation of all members of the international community.

Finally, allow me to take this opportunity to once again emphasize how important it is to realize that one cannot live in the past and that for the sake of peace, security and stability and general prosperity, we have to work together to shape a better future and overcome some open questions from the past. We can only achieve a better future if we strengthen mutual cooperation and trust and demonstrate readiness and responsibility to translate our words into deeds, i.e. that the agreements we make we need to acknowledge and implement in practice, without exception. Serbia has proved to be a responsible partner honoring reached agreements and an exporter of stability by giving and continuing to give its full contribution to the joint goal. Should other stakeholders do the same, which we rightly expect, lasting and sustainable peace and security in the region will be within reach, which we certainly hope will be the case.

Thank you for your attention."