

Q: Should in a kind of a fairy tale, our international counterparts were to accept, in its entirety, the Kosovo document, as prepared by the top state leadership, and referred to as a "Platform" in the media, we would be happy. And, we think it would be fair. And if it would not interfere with the interests of Albanians - Serbian Foreign Minister Ivana Mrkić says in an interview for "Blic" newspapers.

A: He, however, underlines that the document mentioned in the media is not the platform. - "Non-paper" was given to the foreigners, it was a working document. There is no letterhead, no headings, nothing of the kind. It is our viewpoint, our contribution to the solution of the Kosovo issue, we would like it to be looked at that way. We have heard objections that Serbs are incapable of articulating what they want time and time again. We have put it down on paper and all of a sudden caused a big stir.

Q: Have you taken part in putting the Platform together?

A: Just a few of us took part. We worked on it for four months. There were also a number of people from the top state leadership. We did an honest job. We were very responsible and tried to avoid doing harm to anybody.

Q: The Platform has caused serious controversies.

A: It would have been nailed down if it had been left to the Assembly to decide, if all the delegates had their say on it - we would have had no room for maneuver. But that was not the case. We will continue the negotiations. We want a solution and this is just one of the proposals on the table. One of the European Council's conclusions refer to dismantling of parallel institutions, and we have made a proposal to that effect. Like many others. It is not offensive nor is it aimed at harming anyone.

Q: What are the reactions of international community?

A: They are varied. Now, that dust has settled and the true purpose of this paper is understood, I think that it will get support from some corners because it contains some sound solutions.

Q: If the top state leadership participated in the drafting of the Platform, why did Prime Minister Ivica Dacic complain?

A: Because there is a multitude of interpretations and pressure is building with no ground for it. I believe that Prime Minister wanted to make a point that after four months of hard work we have not come out with a paper that is meant to be setback. There are no disagreements in the Government. We worked on it together.

Q: And will the Platform be before the delegates after certain parts thereof have been modified?

A: The working paper will not go to the Parliament at all, because we would not be able to negotiate further. The executive authority is there to take the responsibility. If it succeeds, so

much the better, if it makes a mistake, it will be ousted. A whole assembly can not participate in the negotiations.

Q: Are you happy with the European integration processes?

A: In August, when the new government took office, it did not have proper opportunity. The previous government was given the status (of a candidate) which is great, but it promised many things as well. Therefore the current government is faced with the task of delivering on these promises. It is not easy because we were not active participants in these arrangements, very often we have not been aware of what they involved, so it took a while to realize what these arrangements meant and to implement them. It was a painstaking task, but we had to do it for the sake of continuity.

Q: How do you assess the dialogue between Ivica Dacic and Hasim Taci?

A: Political dialogue has been designed by the new government, for very clear reasons. It is impossible to discuss trivial matters while avoiding the major ones. That would amount to self-delusion. All the coalition partners were in favour of this. Then Dacic embarked upon it, although it is unpopular and carries political risks; but he was supported by the entire state leadership.

Q: Can Serbia get the date for commencing the negotiations with the EU, in June?

A: May be it can. The way things are now, that is very likely. However, we are not wishing for the impossible, nor will the world end if it doesn't happen. What is crucial is our own activity in complying with the EU standards. If we are on the right track, the EU will recognize that and welcome such new member. We are modernizing, introducing changes that are good for the society, the people, the state and all that is being taken note of and very clearly supported.

Q: There is an impression that much has been accomplished, while there has been no adequate response from Brussels.

A: There are other problems too that have nothing to do with Serbia. If this were 2004, everything would be easier. In the most recent conclusions, Serbia was evaluated very well. When Serbia is concerned, I have never read better language. The fact that we were not given the date is understandable for thousands of reasons – the EU has not endorsed its budget nor measures for achieving fiscal discipline. We are doing a good job in all segments and that will be recognized. I am not under the pressure as to what will happen this spring.

Q: We are also anticipating the opening of a liaison office. What are your views on that?

A: Two people will be here as points of contact, who will be dealing with daily issues. Such communication is necessary.

Q: What about the interpretations that they are, in fact, embassies?

A: Pristina can call it a space embassy. Let them call it as they like, that's their problem. We will have our contact person and will be in permanent communication through those people, in order to avoid having the Prime Minister have to travel to Brussels every minute. They will be attached to the EU representation. I don't know what kind of imagination can call it an embassy.

Q: Will Serbia's recognition of Kosovo have to come before its EU membership?

A: Well, if they come and say that we have to recognize Kosovo in order to become a member, we will then say "no, definitely not". These things are serious. We are not going to recognize Kosovo. End of story.

Q: Regional cooperation seems to be stagnating.

A: That's not true. The relations between Serbia and Croatia are very important, but they certainly do not define the relations within the region. We have best relations in the region. We are in permanent communication. I met with them all once or twice, and with some of them even three times. I don't remember that being the case before. I visited Albania, met with Ms. Pusic twice....

Q: Has any consideration been given to mutual dropping off of charges?

A: We will certainly reach an agreement in that regard. We are building a relationship. The judgment rendered in The Hague is unfair and our reaction to it was quite natural. My job is to build good relations and to narrow down the room for disagreement.

Q: When will Presidents Tomislav Nikolic and Ivo Josipovic eventually meet?

A: Ms. Pusic and I are working on that. The two Presidents will meet as soon as there is a reason for that. And before that, our two Prime Ministers will meet. As far as our ministries are concerned, things are moving in the right direction and we always have some projects on our minds.

Ambassadorial recalls are not politically motivated

Q: Why is the Ministry recalling half of its ambassadors?

A: I am not familiar with the numbers, but whoever is reaching the end of the term will be recalled. My intention is to avoid having anyone serve in the embassy for nine years for that person will turn into a foreigner. Shifts are normal and will become a rule.

Q: Will anyone be removed on political grounds?

A: There have been no such cases so far. When they say Ms. Jelica Kurjak, I'm not familiar with her political affiliation nor would I ever ask her that, but she spent eleven years in Moscow. Or Mr. Batakovic, who spent nine years in a row in Paris, Athens and Ottawa. Some of my colleagues have spent 30 years in the Ministry and have not had an opportunity to be

ambassadors anywhere. It is my duty to see that they are appointed, because they deserve it.

(Ivana Mastilović Jasnić)