

SERBIA - RUSSIA**VUCIC: WITHOUT RUSSIA NO SOLUTION FOR KOSOVO AND METOHIJA IS POSSIBLE**

BELGRADE, 17 January 2019 (Beta) - Serbian President Aleksandar Vucic said on Jan. 17 that it was clear that there would be no solution to the issue of Kosovo and Metohija without Russia. "Without Russia and because of Russia's strength in the U.N. Security Council it is clear that there will be no solution without Russia. Before every solution I will consult with [Russian] President [Vladimir] Putin," Vucic told a news conference held with Vladimir Putin at the Palace of Serbia. Vucic recalled that Belgrade had led EU-brokered negotiations with Pristina until the Pristina side decided to introduce a 100 percent tax on all Serbian goods. He added that he could not talk about a solution for KiM, as he could not presently see one, but hoped there would be one. He thanked Putin for his support for the independence of Serbia and its territorial integrity and told him that Russia could always count on Serbia as an ally. Vucic told Putin at the Palace of Serbia that Belgrade had always been able to count on Russian support in international relations as well as that Russia, despite Serbia's being only a small country, could count on Serbia as an ally.

VUCIC: SERBIAN, RUSSIAN FRIENDSHIP ALSO REFLECTED IN ENHANCING ECONOMIC COOPERATION

BELGRADE, 17 January 2019 (Beta) - Serbian President Aleksandar Vucic said on Jan. 17 that Serbia's and Russia's friendship was also reflected in improving economic cooperation, i.e. increasing trade. "Our cooperation is different now, bigger and more comprehensive than in previous years. This cooperation is characterized by good understanding in all key areas and we have transitioned from words to deeds, especially in energy, military cooperation, cooperation in the areas of infrastructure, traffic, education, culture, sports and tourism," Vucic said after meeting with Russia's President Vladimir Putin at the Palace of Serbia. Vucic said that Serbia expected a lot from the Turkish Stream gas pipeline, as "Russian gas is the best and cheapest." Vucic said that Serbia had completed everything necessary for hooking up to the pipeline, which is supposed to carry Russian natural gas to Serbia through Turkey and Bulgaria. "I do not know how others were pressured, but Russia did not have these problems with Serbia, we are resistant to this form of pressure," Vucic said. He said that the gas pipeline was of extraordinary importance to citizens and businesses in Serbia. "I have had it up to here with stories about all of the places that gas could potentially come from, but we cannot pay for other gas at twice the price, we want to buy the best and cheapest gas and that is Russian gas," Vucic said.

PUTIN AWARDS MEDAL OF ALEXANDER NEVSKY TO VUCIC

BELGRADE, 17 January 2019 (Beta) - Russian President Vladimir Putin presented the medal of Alexander Nevsky to Serbian President Aleksandar Vucic in Belgrade on Jan. 17. "I am pleased to decorate the Serbian president with this high state decoration of Russia," Putin said at the Palace of Serbia. Putin said the medal bore the name of a great saint and patron of diplomats, who had won independence in the fight against foreign invaders. "During almost 300 years of history of this decoration, glorious names of Serbian representatives were written as those who

received it, including Prince Milos Obrenovic and Nikola Pasic. Now, your name is also on that list," Putin stated, wishing Vucic good health, well-being and success. Vucic said that, for him, the medal of Alexander Nevsky signified great honor and responsibility in future work on the development of cooperation between Serbia and Russia. "I am proud of Serbia which has deserved this decoration. In recent years, Serbia successfully preserved independence, territorial integrity and military neutrality. This recognition means that we have preserved Serbia as a free state," Vucic said after receiving the medal. Since 2010, 237 individuals have received the medal of Alexander Nevsky, mostly Russian citizens, but also five foreign statesmen. Before Vucic, the medal was awarded to the presidents of Belarus Alexander Lukashenko, Kazakhstan - Nursultan Nazarbayev, Tajikistan - Emomali Rahmon, and Turkmenistan - Gurbanguly Berdimuhamedov. The medal of Alexander Nevsky is awarded to citizens of Russia who perform high state functions and to prominent foreign politicians, public officials and businesspeople who contribute to the development of cooperation with Russia.

PUTIN, VUCIC TOUR CHURCH OF SAINT SAVA

BELGRADE, 17 January 2019 (Beta) - Serbian and Russian presidents, Aleksandar Vucic and Vladimir Putin, were accompanied by Serbian Orthodox Church Patriarch Irinej during a visit on Jan. 17 to the Church of Saint Sava, where they symbolically placed parts of the Russian and Serbian flags in a mosaic being worked on by Russian artists. The two presidents lit candles in the vault of the Church, while the Russian president was acquainted in detail with the work plans. Outside the church Putin spoke to the gathered citizens, whom he thanked for their friendship in Serbian and Russian. "Thank you for your friendship. Spasibo za druzhbu," Putin told the citizens, who were also able to watch the event on video beams. The Russian and Serbian presidents left the Church while the citizens gradually dispersed. According to police, there were over 100,000 people in front of the Church of Saint Sava, who had assembled in a gesture of respect for the Russian president.

PUTIN AND VUCIC LAY WREATHS AT CEMETERY OF LIBERATORS OF BELGRADE

BELGRADE, 17 January 2019 (Beta) - Russian President Vladimir Putin and Serbian President Aleksandar Vucic laid wreaths at the Cemetery of Liberators of Belgrade and at the Monument to the Red Army Soldier. The fallen soldiers of the People's Liberation Army of Yugoslavia and the Soviet Red Army, who gave their lives for the liberation of Belgrade in 1944, are buried at the Cemetery of Liberators of Belgrade. The ribbon on the wreath laid by Vucic read "To the brave Russian comrades-in-arms".

PUTIN: MOSCOW SUPPORTS MUTUALLY ACCEPTABLE SOLUTION FOR KOSOVO AND METOHIJA

BELGRADE, 17 January 2019 (Beta) - Russian President Vladimir Putin said in Belgrade on Jan. 17 that Russia supported a mutually acceptable solution for Kosovo and Metohija based on U.N. Security Council Resolution 1244. "Russia, like Serbia, is interested in the Balkans staying stable and safe. Russia's stance on Kosovo is known, we support reaching an acceptable solution based on Resolution 1244," Putin said at a joint news conference with Serbian President Aleksandar Vucic. Putin further said: "Unfortunately, the Kosovo authorities have as

of lately been taking provocative steps that have raised tensions," and added that "the Kosovo army is directly violating Resolution 1244" and that Russia shared Serbia's concern that said steps would lead to a destabilization of affairs. Asked whether Russia would join efforts to solve the question of Kosovo, Putin said that Moscow had always been active on the issue, and as for direct mediation the EU was already doing that, albeit poorly, and pointed to the example of the creation of a Community of Serb Municipalities. Resolution 1244 envisages the possible presence of Serbian police and border police in Kosovo territory, Putin added. It is necessary to honor international law more and then a just solution will be possible, the Russian president said, adding that Russia would work with its partners to ensure that a just solution was reached.

PUTIN: RUSSIA AMONG THE BIGGEST INVESTORS IN SERBIA

BELGRADE, 17 January 2019 (Beta) - Russian President Vladimir Putin said in Belgrade on Jan. 17 that Russia was one of the biggest investors in Serbia. He also said that trade between Russia and Serbia had grown drastically and currently amounted to two billion dollars. Putin said that relations between Russia and Serbia were developing in many directions, and singled out the sectors of security, energy, high technology, humanitarian ties, but also cooperation between the judicial bodies and state prosecutions. "We do not only deliver military equipment to Serbia, but also buy from Serbia, including combat equipment," the Russian president stated. He said that conditions would be created for further steps in the development of bilateral cooperation.

BRNABIC: SERBIA, RUSSIA SIGN SIX AGREEMENTS IN AREAS OF INNOVATION, DIGITAL ECONOMY

BELGRADE, 17 January 2019 (Beta) - Serbian Prime Minister Ana Brnabic voiced her satisfaction with the signing of six agreements in the areas of innovation and digital economy during Russian President Vladimir Putin's visit to Serbia on Jan. 17. She stressed that, owing to expert staff and duty-free exports to Russia and the EU, Serbia had the unique potential to become a hub for high-technology companies. "For the first time we are establishing a dialogue on cooperation in the areas of digitization, innovation and modern technology between Russia and Serbia, which, I believe, will become a regular format for cooperation between our economies," Brnabic said. She stressed that, for Serbia, cooperation between Serbian and Russian high-tech companies was of exceptional importance. "It is especially important that some of the most innovative Russian companies, such as Rosatom or Kaspersky, earlier displayed interest in doing business in Serbia, so there is no doubt that today's visit will bring more similar results," Brnabic said. She called on Russian companies to open their offices and above all development centers in Serbia, and pledged that the Serbian government would be a reliable partner. Brnabic acquainted her Russian guests, who were headed by Putin's special aide in charge of digitization Dmitry Peskov, with the results of reforms being conducted in Serbia which could be of significance to Russian corporate involvement. The gathering in Belgrade was attended by Minister of Innovation and Technological Development of Serbia Nenad Popovic and Serbian Chamber of Commerce President Marko Cadez.

SERBIAN, RUSSIAN REPRESENTATIVES SIGN SEVERAL DOCUMENTS ON COOPERATION

BELGRADE, 17 January 2019 (Beta) - More than 20 agreements and memoranda on cooperation in various fields were signed during Russian President Vladimir Putin's working visit to Serbia, one third of them in the field of innovation and new technologies. The delegations of Serbia and Russia, in the presence of presidents Aleksandar Vucic and Vladimir Putin, exchanged the documents which the representatives had signed. The plan of consultations of the two countries' foreign ministries in 2019 and 2020 was signed by ministers Ivica Dacic and Sergey Lavrov. An agreement was signed on the use of nuclear power for peaceful purposes, and initialed by the general director of Rosatom, Alexey Likhachev, and the Serbian minister in charge of innovation, Nenad Popovic. Popovic and the general director of the Russian state-owned company Rosseti, Pavel Levinsky, signed the memorandum on Serbian-Russian cooperation in the development of innovations in the electric energy sector. The Serbian minister also signed the memorandum of understanding in the field of development of digital technologies. Popovic also signed the memorandum of understanding on Russian-Serbian cooperation in the field of exploration and utilization of space for peaceful purposes with the general director of Roscosmos, Dmitry Rogozin. An agreement was signed on cooperation in the reconstruction and capacity enlargement of the Djerdap 2 hydroelectric power plant, between the companies Silovye Mashiny and the Electric Power Industry of Serbia (EPS), and a memorandum of cooperation in the electric energy sector. Minister of Mining and Energy Aleksandar Antic told the Serbian Broadcasting Corporation (RTS) that the plan was for the output of the power plant, which has not been repaired since it was built, to be increased from 270 to 320 megawatts, and for its reconstruction to secure safe operation in the next 30 years. Representatives of Serbia and Russia signed a memorandum on cooperation in joint projects in developing infrastructure for the production and distribution of liquefied natural gas. The signed memorandum of understanding concerning the project for the capacity enlargement of the Banatski Dvor underground gas storage facility envisages its enlargement by 60 percent, from 450 to 750 million cubic meters. The development will also raise the daily exploitation capacity from five to 10 million cubic meters, which are the maximum daily needs during winter. Serbia consumes around two billion cubic meters of imported gas annually. In the field of infrastructure, a contract was signed between the Serbian Railways Infrastructure and the Russian company RZD International, on new projects on the railways, worth 230 million euros. The contract envisages the construction of a central dispatching center for the railway, worth EUR127.4 million, works on the construction of electrical railway infrastructure on the segment between Stara Pazova and Novi Sad worth EUR91.9 million and the creation of design documents for the reconstruction of 210 kilometers of the Belgrade-Bar railway, from Valjevo to the Montenegrin border, for which the remaining 10.7 million is designated. The labor ministers of the two countries, Zoran Djordjevic and Maxim Topilin, signed an administrative agreement on welfare security, the protocol on the exchange of charters on coming into effect of the social insurance agreement between Russia and Serbia, and the memorandum of understanding on cooperation in the field of social protection.

ECONOMY

EBRD INVESTS EUR395 MILLION IN 18 PROJECTS IN SERBIA IN 2018

BELGRADE, 17 January 2019 (Beta) - The European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD) stated on Jan. 17 that it invested an additional EUR395 million in 18 new

projects in Serbia in 2018, making the bank's total investments in Serbia since 2001 exceed five billion euros. With the aim of boosting the private sector, the EBRD has directed assets worth almost 200 million euros into credit lines, financing of trade and guarantees to local commercial banks, which will be used for crediting local small and medium enterprises, the statement reads. Small and medium enterprises in Serbia will thus have easier access to financing, which will help them become more competitive and energy efficient, and which will boost trade. It was stated that, during 2018, the EBRD mobilized private assets for the first large public-private partnership project - the financing of an extensive modernization of the Nikola Tesla Airport in Belgrade, which is the main air traffic hub in the country and the region. The bank continued its support of the development of traffic connections in Serbia through the loan for Serbia Train, worth EUR22 million, for the construction of a new railway depot in Zemun. Aiming to incite the growth of Serbian companies, the bank supported the domestic furniture producer Forma Ideale with EUR10 million and the agricultural company MK Group with 25 million euros in 2018.