



First Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs Ivica Dacic participated in today's Conference "Training Political Leaders", organized by the Policy Institute in Bulgaria. Minister Dacic spoke to the participants on the theme "The Balkans: yesterday, today and tomorrow".

The Foreign Minister underlined Serbia's desire to reach a compromise solution on Kosovo and Metohija, but that the issue could not be used in foreign policy brokering as a requirement for EU membership.

"A dialogue is being conducted with Pristina in order to reach agreement but without meeting the interests of any one side alone, i.e. one side cannot win it all and the other nothing".

Dacic underlined that Serbia's experience with Kosovo and Metohija can be replicated in any other country, and that it is, therefore, important to establish and abide by principles that would serve as guidance to all.

"We are fighting a battle while striving for compromise which the other side does not want. The fact is that many EU Member States and Western countries have recognized the independence of Kosovo, but it is also a fact that many countries have not recognize it; therefore, the issue cannot be considered as settled."

The Minister recalled the devastation of property and religious sites in Kosovo and Metohija, adding that, because of its history and tradition, Serbia cannot accept Kosovo as an independent state.

He stated that strategically Serbia was headed to European integration, underlining that the EU "is a tranquilizing idea", and that the Balkan peoples do not stir trouble if they share a common future.

Minister Dacic underlined that the Balkan unity idea should solely be based on interest, for if it was based on emotions, the relations would be volatile and susceptible to change.

He further pointed out the closeness between the Serbian and Bulgarian peoples, the similarity of their mentality and lifestyle.

"It is important to identify a common interest to ensure mutual assistance and empowerment of the entire Balkan population. The Minister assessed that political battles were fought quite

differently nowadays, and that the line between the Left and the Right was quite thin. He further said that becoming a leader was not an easy task, since every political leader needed backing by a distinct political force and a clear idea behind him/her.

Concluding his statement, the Foreign Minister sent out a message to Conference participants that policies must set in the minds of people before generations of voters supporting an idea can be developed.