



Address by First Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs Ivica Dacic at the oath ceremony by Honorary Consul Dragan Markovic at the Embassy of Greece in Belgrade:

Dear Ambassador Eliadis,
Dear Mr. Markovic,
Ladies and gentlemen,
Dear guests,

It is an honour and pleasure for me to welcome you here today, on behalf of the Government of the Republic of Serbia, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and myself, and to thank you for inviting me to attend the oath ceremony by the Honorary Consul of the Hellenic Republic to the Republic of Serbia, Mr. Dragan Markovic.

I wish to underline with pleasure the traditionally friendly and very good relations with Greece, also affirmed through an intensified and continued dialogue on all levels. The Hellenic Republic is our important partner, an EU and NATO member state, strongly supporting the EU integration process of Serbia as well as the preservation of its territorial integrity and sovereignty in Kosovo and Metohija. Greece advocates promotion of regional cooperation with Serbia and other countries of the Western Balkans.

Greece is one of the leading investors in the Serbian economy. Higher levels of economic cooperation are very much developed (200 joint ventures). As regards the financial sector, 4 Greek banks take 15% of the banking market in Serbia. Greek businessmen are interested in assisting the performance of the Serbian economy on the EU market and in taking advantage of the special economic ties between Serbia and Russia through joint ventures. Cultural cooperation is also being developed at a dynamic speed. Greece is the most popular tourist destination for Serbian visitors. Our diaspora has around 8,000 members, the majority of whom live in Athens and Thessaloniki.

I wish to emphasize that the establishment of the consular post of the Hellenic Republic in Jagodina, headed by an honorary consular officer with jurisdiction over Pomoravlje, Rasina, Sumadija and Branicevo districts, will give an additional impetus to the intensification and expansion of cooperation between the Republic of Serbia and the Hellenic Republic, particularly in the areas of trade, investment, tourism, culture, education, science and technology. The activities and endeavours of the Honorary Consul of the Hellenic Republic in Jagodina will further broaden exchange of information between the two countries and strengthen the ties

between the two peoples as well as improve the quality of consular protection. Honorary Consul Dragan Markovic has served as Mayor of Jagodina since 2004. His United Serbia party is a coalition partner of the Socialist Party of Serbia. Mr. Dragan Markovic has been entrepreneur for more than 35 years and owns a company dealing with transportation, mechanical engineering and trade, employing more than 100 people, and Palma Plus TV station. He received an award as the best entrepreneur of the Republic of Serbia in 2004 and the best Yugoslav manager in 1995. He holds major international awards, including the title of Honorary Citizen of the town of Katerini in Greece, which was conferred on him on 28 August 2015, and the Honorary Senator of the Senate of Economy of Serbia, founded in collaboration with the Senate of Economy of Austria. Since 2004, the town of Jagodina, led by Dragan Markovic, has experienced an economic and infrastructural revival and become the leading tourist, economic, sporting and education centre in this part of Serbia, the town with the best welfare programme, known beyond the borders of our country.

Knowing the Honorary Consul as a person and the fact that the relations between the Republic of Serbia and the Hellenic Republic are devoid of any outstanding issues, we expect that Mr. Markovic, as a matter of priority, will focus his activities on revitalizing the economic cooperation as well as the cooperation in the areas of tourism and development of cultural and sports ties between the two countries.

The institution of an honorary consular officer has a rich tradition and is of great importance in the diplomatic and consular relations of the Republic of Serbia. The Republic of Serbia has 75 honorary consuls abroad, including Greece with honorary consular posts in Corfu, Cephalonia and Volos. The consular post in Volos started to operate on 15 September 2018. Also, in March 2018, an initiative was launched to establish one more Consulate of Serbia in Greece, headed by the Honorary Consul with a seat at Heraklion, Island of Crete.

27 consulates of foreign countries headed by honorary consular officers have been established in the Republic of Serbia. Honorary consuls are mostly businessmen, prominent lawyers, academics, cultural professionals as well as people of other occupations. As a rule, they are all persons respected in their own communities, who have accepted on a voluntary basis and with the best of intentions to perform these responsible duties.

I am convinced that the Honorary Consul of the Republic of Greece in Jagodina, Mr. Dragan Markovic, will contribute to the promotion of a dialogue on issue of mutual interest as well as to the establishment of closer ties and cooperation between the Republic of Serbia and the Republic of Greece.

Dear Mr. Markovic,
I wish you, once again, every success in your work.

Thank you.