



Statement by Ivica Dačić, First Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Serbia at the 25th Ministerial Council of the OSCE

"Chairperson-in-Office, Minister Milanesi,
Your Excellencies,
Dear Colleagues,

Let me start by expressing our appreciation to the Italian Chairmanship and the Chairperson-in-Office, Minister Enzo Moavero Milanesi, for their dedication and the stewardship over the past year, as well as for their hospitality and excellent facilities for the Ministerial Council in the wonderful city of Milan.

At the beginning, let me recall the recent great centenary of the end of World War I which, exactly one hundred years ago, had unprecedented consequences for the destiny of mankind. As a country that has lost one million two hundred and fifty thousand people in the First World War or almost 30% of its total population at that time, Serbia has every right to say that we should never abandon diplomacy, since the price of any diplomatic effort is much less than the loss of a single human life. Misunderstandings and disputes are always possible, but it is of crucial importance to find the political will, ways and means to overcome them, and to address open questions constructively.

Mr. Chairperson,

Over the past five years the OSCE has been confronted with one of the biggest crisis in its history that is continuing in spite of all our efforts. We are concerned about the deterioration of the security situation in Eastern Ukraine affecting civilians in the conflict zone, as well as about the continuous impediments to the freedom of movement, frequent intimidation and attacks on the monitors and property of the OSCE. Therefore, we call upon all sides to fully and unconditionally respect the cease-fire, end all hostilities and implement the provisions of the Minsk Agreements. We strongly support the work of the Special Monitoring Mission in Ukraine, as well as all other constructive efforts aimed at finding a peaceful solution to the crisis with full respect of OSCE principles. We are also concerned about the recent events in the Sea of Azov and call upon the parties concerned to find a solution based on international law through

dialogue and co-operation.

Serbia continues to support all agreed formats established in order to resolve protracted conflicts, being convinced that the greatest responsibility lies with the parties involved. As an example of the feasibility of finding a solution for years-long protracted conflicts, I would like to underline the conclusion of the Prespa Agreement. Serbia fully supports the agreement between the two parties as well as full implementation of what was agreed.

At the same time, we need to strengthen the OSCE tools to effectively respond in all phases of the conflict cycle, from early warning to post-conflict rehabilitation and reconciliation.

Mr. Chairperson,

Serbia is dedicated to European integration and substantive regional cooperation, performing as a credible partner in ensuring stability and security in the region. We are committed to the EU-led dialogue with Priština and to the implementation of all arrangements based on the Brussels Agreement of April 2013. However, , in order for dialogue to continue, we believe that it is necessary to immediately suspend the decision by Priština to impose 100% tariffs on goods originating from central Serbia. We strongly condemn the decision, the same as the recent burning in public of Serbian goods in Kosovo and Metohija, which is an unprecedented action. Intimidation of the Serbian population by the Kosovo police special forces, together with the "trade war" started by Priština, represents a clear attack on the Serbian population, which deserves condemnation by all participating States.

Last but not least, I would like to say a few words about yesterday's decision on Albania 2020 OSCE Chairmanship-in-Office. It is common knowledge that our positions on the issue of the unilaterally declared independence of "Kosovo" are diametrically opposed. For this reason, and also bearing in mind previous actions taken by Albania in the framework of none other than this distinguished Organization, Serbia expressed its concerns that Albania could use its position as Chair to promote the unilaterally declared independence of "Kosovo" and to include its representatives into some segments of OSCE activities.

In several conversations and letters exchanged with my colleague, Albanian Minister of Foreign Affairs Bushati, I was given strong assurances and guarantees that the Albanian side will adhere to the fundamental principles of the Organization. It is, therefore, our expectation that Albania will conduct its OSCE Chairmanship in full compliance with the OSCE norms, principles and commitments. Serbia remains committed to the good neighbourly relations, advancement of our region and improvement of regional stability and stands ready to share its experience from its successful 2015 OSCE Chairmanship-in-Office.

Allow me to express my sincere appreciation to the outgoing Italian Chairmanship and particularly to the Chairperson-in-Office, Minister Enzo Moavero Milanesi, for their able guidance over this year. I would also like to warmly welcome and pledge our full support to the incoming Slovak Chairmanship.

Thank you, Mr. Chairperson."