



Statement by Mr. Ivica DAČIĆ, First Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Serbia, at the Fourth Regular Council of Ministers of the Association of Caribbean States, Managua, Republic of Nicaragua:

"Distinguished Ministers,
Ladies and gentlemen,

At the outset, I would like to thank the Government of the Republic of Nicaragua for inviting me to attend this meeting of Heads of State or Government of the Association of Caribbean States and for giving me special honour to address the Meeting of Foreign Ministers of the Association of Caribbean States.

You are marking this year an important anniversary – 25 years of joint work and endeavours to create a better, happier and more substantive living conditions for your citizens by establishing solid ties in a region sharing similar challenges, whether politically or in terms of life, economic prosperity, education or impact of climate change.

Although geographically far part, we still remember the excellent relations that the former Yugoslavia maintained with the Caribbean states and that is why we would like to renew the former ties and friendship with your peoples. The Republic of Serbia has launched a series of activities to restore bilateral cooperation with many states of Latin America and the Caribbean and 17 years ago it also initiated the establishment of institutionalized cooperation with regional organizations, such as the Organization of American States, the Caribbean Community (CARICOM) and eventually, with the Association of Caribbean States.

We are pleased to be among the states that share the same values, such as the respect of international law and its principles, and that today within the Association of Caribbean States we can develop cooperation with them on concrete projects as well.

We are particularly grateful to have been able to host Secretary General Dr June Soomer at the end of May last year. The talks we had then will be conducive to exploring areas and modalities for cooperation with the ACS on the basis of the signed Framework Agreement between the

Government of the Republic of Serbia and the Association of Caribbean States.

We are convinced that there are a number of areas in which we identify common interest. Let me highlight just a few of those.

One of the best ways to restore and establish stronger ties between the peoples of the two regions, to get to know each other better and appreciate our diverse customs and lifestyles, is no doubt the cooperation among cultural and educational institutions. It is a well-known fact that students who received education in foreign countries may serve as an invaluable connection for the future. We know that very well, since over the past fifty years Belgrade has hosted students from various parts of the world, first from the Non-Aligned Movement and today through "The World in Serbia" program. They now represent our connection to these regions.

Although an exclusively continental country, the past few years have marked a significant increase in the number of tourist visits to my country and its numerous cultural and amusement sites as well as to its natural beauties. I believe that there is room for exploring modalities and overcoming a long geographic distance between our regions and for their becoming closer through tourist offer. We are ready therefore to exchange with the ACS experiences in this field.

Climate change and effects thereof on the lives of all inhabitants on planet Earth is a major topic and it causes concern to all of us. The Republic of Serbia has already experienced the consequences of climate change in the wake of devastating floods that affected us in May 2014. If climate change could have such an impact on a land-locked country, we fully understand the legitimate concern of the Caribbean countries, island countries in particular, for their own survival.

In countering the floods, Serbia gained important experience in terms of timely protection against natural disasters as well as in connection with dealing with the consequences of great disasters. We are ready to share that experience with our Caribbean partners.

The Government of the Republic of Serbia will examine the projects presented to us today by the Association of Caribbean States with due attention and in consultation with this organization, examine the optimum ways to assist and strengthen cooperation with the Caribbean states.

In conclusion, let me thank once again Nicaragua, our host, for their generous hospitality and commend them for an excellent organization of this meeting.

Thank you."

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