



Address of First Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs Ivica Dacic to students of the Serbian Orthodox Secondary School "Kantakuzina Katarina Brankovic" from Zagreb:

"Dear students,

Welcome to Belgrade and to the home of Serbian diplomacy. The Museum of Diplomacy is a place where political history of our people and of our state of Serbia spanning two centuries has been stored for safekeeping.

Meeting you makes me happy because you are a new generation born after the year 2000 that should serve as a bridge of cooperation and understanding between Serbia and Croatia.

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Your ancestors and fellow nationals, the Serbs from Croatia, made a considerable social, political, cultural, scientific and other impact on the formation of all state communities in the territory of present-day Croatia. Today, you should be proud to be descendants of writers Petar Preradovic, Simo Matavulj, Vladan Desnica, poets Branko Radicevic and Grigor Vitez, scientists Nikola Tesla and Milutin Milankovic, composer Josif Runjanin, sculptor Vojin Bakic, a great philanthropist and merchant Vladimir Matijevec, painter Sava Sumanovic, while some of you might even be descendants of famous Red Star FC goal-keeper Vladimir Beara.

Since you attend the school established by the Metropolitanate of Zagreb and Ljubljana, you surely know that in almost any city in Croatia there are Serbian Orthodox Church places of worship practising religion – monasteries Krka, Krupa, Dragovic, Gomirje, Ocestovo, Orahovica, Lepavina as well as congregational churches in Zagreb, Karlovac, Rijeka, Pakrac, Sibenik, Zadar and Dubrovnik.

As far as I know, in addition to standard Croatian curricula taught in your school you can also study and learn Serbian language and literature as well as our history, culture, geography,

music and art. In doing so, you are embracing a spirit of multiculturalism enabling you to engage in dialogue with your peers from other cultural backgrounds by investing in a common future.

Of course, today we live in a Europe of open borders and it is very likely that you will attend university in a country other than your own. Still, it is important for you to preserve your identity – the Serb identity and that of the Serbs of Croatia. In addition to preserving the Serbian language and Cyrillic alphabet, the Christian Orthodox religion and cherishing the memory of famous people that I mentioned earlier, it is also important that you foster anti-Fascism as one of the most important features of Serbian identity in Croatia.

I would like to tell you that Serbia, as your mother country, devotes special attention to youth education and preservation of cultural and national identity of the Serbian people in the region. In the past year, we allocated some financial resources to your school as well as to Serbian business society "Privrednik" providing scholarships to pupils and students belonging to the Serbian national minority in Croatia. It is quite possible that in pursuing further academic education some of you might be beneficiaries of these scholarships.

At the same time, each year from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs budget we allocate funds for events, schools, education camps and workshops, through a funding mechanism for tenders conducted by the Office for Cooperation with the Diaspora and the Serbs from the Region. With "Serbia for Serbs of the Region" project, in this academic year, out of 18 freshmen from the region studying in the Republic of Serbia, 7 come from Croatia. We hope that they will go back home and contribute to the well-being of the Serb community in Croatia as well as to nurturing ties between the two states as they look to the future.

I thank you for your attention and wish you a pleasant and comfortable stay in Belgrade!"

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