



The keynote address by First Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Serbia Ivo Dacic at the Ninth Conference of Journalists and the Media of Diaspora and Serbs in the Region:

"Distinguished participants of the Ninth Conference of the Media of Diaspora and Serbs in the Region,

Esteemed organizers,  
Ladies and gentlemen,

It is my great pleasure to have the opportunity to address you this year as well and I would like to thank you for the kind invitation. The very fact that we attend today the Ninth Media Conference and that these events have by now had years of success and continuity demonstrate that the provision of information to the diaspora and Serbs in the region has been a vital aspect of the cooperation between the motherland and the diaspora, i.e., the mother country and the Serbs in the region.

It is not only our moral but also constitutional obligation and an everyday task to promote the relations between the motherland and our nationals and compatriots abroad. These endeavours are based on the 2006 Declaration of the Government of the Republic of Serbia which declared the motherland – diaspora relations one of the highest state and national interest. Furthermore, the Law on Diaspora and Serbs in the Region was also adopted, followed by the adoption of the Strategy for the preservation and strengthening of relations between the mother country and the diaspora, and the mother country and Serbs in the region. It was the Strategy that foresaw the media field as an important instrument within the collective efforts for the protection of the Serbian language and identity.

{youtube}VzTUI\_ZtU2c{/youtube}

Ladies and gentlemen,

I would like to point out that the provision of information is a two-way process. One way - from the motherland to the diaspora, in the context of our competences implies provision of information to the diaspora and the Serbian people in the region about the policy pursued by the Republic of Serbia. It is important to note that the information transfer in this direction does not end with our people living abroad, but that they distribute it further so that the voice of Serbia can often be loudly heard in the public sphere in foreign countries, too. So far, this has proven to be of exquisite importance, most notably when dealing with topics relevant to the protection of Serbian national interests, such as safeguarding the rights of Serbian people in Kosovo and Metohija, but also our historical and cultural heritage.

The opposite direction in this two-way process, transferring information collected abroad to the motherland, is of particular significance to us in Serbia monitoring the situation of the diaspora and Serbs of the region and working to promote and strengthen ties between us. It is conferences like the one held today that should play a contributing role in promoting connectivity and information exchange in the future, with an end goal of ensuring widest possible dissemination of information on the activities carried out by the diaspora and Serbs of the region, primarily those related to the preservation of cultural and language identity of our expatriates abroad.

Distinguished participants of the conference,

The existing well-established cooperation mechanisms supporting the diaspora and persons belonging to the Serbian communities in the region have their main focus on the preservation of cultural and language identity. Among these, I would like to single out in particular the co-funding of cultural activities of Serbs living abroad and of the Serb media in the region carried out by the Ministry of Culture and the Media, as well as co-financing projects implemented by the Ministry I am heading and its Office for Cooperation with the Diaspora and Serbs in the Region. I would also like to draw your attention to the significant role in these activities played by the Ministry of Justice and its Office for Cooperation with Churches and Religious Communities and, finally, the major role of the supplementary schools network organized by the Ministry of Education, Science and Technological Development, pursuant to an Agreement between our two Ministries. In this context, it would be remiss of me not to bring up the university scholarship programme for Serbs living in the region entitled "Serbia for the Serbs of the Region", which has seen a steady increase in interested students. The efforts made to have holders of university degrees stay in Serbia or establish lasting ties with Serbia as their mother country have resulted in a new and practical approach to the scientific diaspora.

I would like to underline in particular that the period behind us saw the Government of the Republic of Serbia devote special attention to the scientific diaspora. The adoption of the completely new Cooperation Programme between the Serbian science community and the diaspora, being implemented by the Science Fund of the Republic of Serbia, came as a result of the need to adjust and promote the existing cooperation mechanisms to the needs of the emerging highly-educated diaspora. At the same time, our tireless efforts to build regional stability and promote the economic situation also seek to encourage the idea of return, thus alleviating the consequences of brain drain to an extent at least, as these highly-skilled persons are those spearheading the modern technological trends and as such have a potential to play a

pivotal role in the further development of our state and society.

What Serbia needs are valiant and courageous individuals, given that our country is too small to be able to afford losing quality human resources that cannot be replaced or replenished later on. In the context of our concerted efforts to make the region a more attractive place to live, the initiative to establish what is commonly referred to as "mini-Schengen" is a perfect fit, as it strives to ensure conditions for the free movement of people, goods, services and capital, thus contributing to connectivity and efforts to identify sustainable solutions for the challenges of the past burdening the region, as well as the challenges we have yet to face in the future.

Distinguished participants of the conference,

In conclusion, I would like to say that I sincerely hope that the events like this one, fostering the concept of community while solidifying business contacts between the motherland and the diaspora, will contribute to the sense of belonging to the Serb community and among all our citizens, wherever they lived.

I wish you success in your deliberations and the best of luck.

Long live Serbia!"

{youtube}WAltzkpLOPE{/youtube}