



Statement by First Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Dacic at a meeting of foreign ministers of Berlin participants:

Distinguished Ministers Dimitrov and Zaharieva,  
Dear fellow Ministers,  
Dear friends,

I would like to greet you and thank you for inviting me to take part in this event. First of all, I wish to congratulate the Republic of North Macedonia and the Republic of Bulgaria and Foreign Ministers Nikola Dimitrov and Ekaterina Zaharieva on the first joint chairmanship of the Berlin Process carried out by two participants from the region. We are certain that no-one could have a better grasp of our region, its unique features and heritage as well as its aspirations and desires than those of us who come from the region, which is why Serbia views your joint chairmanship as a positive step towards shifting the focus of this regional format to its immediate protagonists. I would also like to congratulate you on the arrangements you made together to organize this ministerial meeting.

{youtube}GL5Bvaj53qY{/youtube}

Serbia attaches great importance to the Berlin Process and welcomes the priorities set out by the North Macedonia-Bulgaria joint chairmanship. We deeply believe that this process can in no way whatsoever be a replacement for the European integration one. In this context, I need not recall that full membership of the European Union is the key foreign policy priority of Serbia, and that the very same aspiration is shared by other participants from the region as well.

In other words, the firm commitment to European integration by all stakeholders in the region is unquestionable. We could rather talk about scepticism heard among the EU Member States. We hope that the new EU methodology aimed at promoting accession talks will contribute, in the immediate future, to overcoming all obstacles to the progress of all regional participants in the European integration process. A necessary precondition for this is to set clear criteria and to firmly adhere to the agreed progress benchmarks. Even though the new methodology is not mandatory for Serbia, as outlined, we certainly do have an interest in the opportunities it offers. In any case, it needs to be borne in mind that Serbia has already made a significant progress in

the EU integration process and the accession talks as well as that extensive efforts and accomplishments we have made need to be properly valorised and recognised.

The example of North Macedonia and Albania is most indicative of the need to establish a clear and credible approach. Despite the efforts made by Tirana and Skopje to meet the required criteria and a number of promises having been made by EU officials, the concrete decision to open the talks has not been reached yet. It is our sincere hope that such a decision will be made in the nearest future. Furthermore, Serbia is dissatisfied with the dynamic of chapters being opened so far, even though we have, on our part, taken many steps and earned opening a significantly larger number of chapters. We hope that the period to come will see better conditions be secured for our faster progress towards the EU, in line with clear conditions outlined in advance. Also, giving Bosnia and Herzegovina the status of a candidate is the next step ahead that is missing. I need not remind you, either, about the need to ensure free movement for all citizens of the Balkans.

As I have already stressed at the previous debate, Serbia is committed to promoting regional cooperation with an orientation to play a contributing role towards this goal. However, a precondition for successful maintenance and promotion of regional cooperation is strict adherence by all regional participants, no exceptions made, to the agreements concluded and regional cooperation frameworks agreed.

Therefore, I once again strongly urge for an immediate and unconditional revocation of the tariffs unilaterally imposed by Pristina PISGs, posing an existential threat to the ordinary citizens.

Let me remind you that, despite the approach pursued by Pristina, Belgrade did not resort to any reciprocal measures as we have been against taking unilateral steps from the very beginning of the dialogue with Pristina, as this is highly detrimental to the efforts aimed at reaching a compromise solution.

Even in the face of such difficult conditions for cooperation, Serbia has taken a number of successful steps aiming to deepen regional cooperation. For example, we signed together with other participants from the Western Balkans the Regional Roaming Agreement allowing reduction of roaming rates, while the National Assembly of Serbia recently adopted the Law on ratification of the Protocol 6 to the CEFTA Agreement on the liberalization of trade in services, all with the aim of expanding prospects for the promotion of economic cooperation in the Western Balkan region. This here is no other than a demonstration of our constructive approach to the relations in the Balkans, in which context trade represents one of the important pillars and a generator of the overall economic development. Furthermore, we support the continuation of regional talks on professional qualifications, despite problems caused by unilateral measures. This is yet another evidence that Belgrade's approach to issues related to all our citizens' everyday lives and lives of all in our region is not a careless one, but civilized instead.

We are even ready to go the extra mile in our endeavours, by which I refer in particular to the initiative to further deepen the economic cooperation by ensuring conditions to allow all the four freedoms (movement of people, goods, services and capital) and pillars of the EU itself, to

thrive in our region as well.

In the context of Belgrade-Pristina relations, in January this year, together with the German airline company Lufthansa, representatives of Belgrade and Pristina signed a letter of intent to renew flights between Belgrade and Pristina after more than 20 years. Furthermore, a statement of intent was signed in Munich in February on re-establishing the railway traffic.

All of the above clearly demonstrates the continued orientation of Belgrade to actively engage in promoting regional cooperation, i.e., its commitment to the continuation of the dialogue with Pristina. In making these decisions, we were motivated by the idea that we owe it to ourselves, the future generations and common prosperity and that we need to take such steps and give a full chance to regional cooperation, stability in the region and further progress of all in the Western Balkans towards full membership of the European Union.

Thank you!