



First Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Serbia Ivica Dacic addressed students of Law Faculties of the Belgrade and Nis Universities as well as students of the Faculty of Political Sciences in Belgrade:

"Dear students,
Distinguished professors,
Dear colleagues,

Welcome to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Serbia. I would like to commend in particular your interest to pay a visit to this institution, given the importance of the subject of your studies in the course of which you tackle from an academic and theoretical point of view the field of international relations and foreign policy. I hope that the lecture on Serbian foreign policy priorities I am about to give will be useful for your further studies, confident that some of you will have, in the years ahead, an opportunity to protect and pursue our country's foreign policy as diplomats.

{youtube}dKTEbb_7lhY{/youtube}

Serbian foreign policy is based on two key premises - a principled approach and adherence to the fundamental values at the core of modern western civilizations. This principled approach to international relations, primarily reflected in adherence to the provisions of international law and the principle of equality of sovereign states, has been of major importance for our country. On the other hand, our elevated sense for certain values in the context of foreign policy positioning and commitment to making Serbian foreign policy-related decisions on the basis of respect for the inviolability of territorial integrity, development of democracy and rule of law, stems from our experiences of the recent past and challenges our country faced in the previous decades.

Diplomatic activities pursued by Serbia have largely focused on the achievement of its fundamental foreign policy priorities and goals, such as the preservation of the territorial integrity and sovereignty, development of bilateral relations with the most powerful countries,

active contribution to the work of key international organizations, promotion of relations with neighbours and of regional cooperation, but also membership of the European Union.

In addition to the above premises, Serbia has also adhered to legitimate national interests in the realization of its foreign policy goals, employing solely diplomacy and dialogue as instruments of foreign policy decision-making.

I will underline again that Kosovo and Metohija is an issue of top national interest, our priority national and foreign policy issue, and at the same time the biggest political and security challenge. We have made significant efforts to protect the sovereignty and territorial integrity of our country, thus contributing to the safeguarding of international law, the Charter of the United Nations and the role played by the Security Council, as important instruments for maintaining the balance of power in international relations as well as international peace and security.

I would like to emphasize that the results we have achieved in our endeavour to clarify to as many countries and have them better acquainted with our position that the issue of Kosovo and Metohija has not been resolved once and for all represent one of the crucial foreign policy successes achieved by Serbia. The process of revocation and suspension of recognitions of the unilaterally declared independence of "Kosovo" is unrelenting, 18 countries have done this so far, with Sierra Leone being the latest country to take this courageous step. I am certain that the success we have achieved and the decisions on the revocation of recognition of "Kosovo" will also prove significant in a broader sense in the scope of international relations theory, particularly in the study of the matter of secessionism. The entire Serbian top leadership has approached this subject with determination, energy and commitment which has shown concrete results, and we can now proudly say that the majority of the United Nations member states at this point do not recognize the unilaterally declared independence of "Kosovo".

Despite the above success of the campaign for revocation of recognitions, it needs to be borne in mind that finding a political solution for Kosovo and Metohija is our national priority, on which Serbia has based its commitment to the Belgrade-Pristina dialogue. Full-aware of its importance not only for the resolution of issues related to property, cultural and religious heritage, cadastral records and freedom of movement, but also for the stability of the region as a whole, Serbia has been a constructive partner in the dialogue throughout, unlike the other side which has sadly failed to fulfill even a minimum of its obligations. Since the signing of the Brussels Agreement until today, the Community of Serbian Municipalities has not been established, quite the opposite, Pristina took their obstruction a step further and imposed 100% tariffs on goods originating from central Serbia, which resulted in the dialogue being broken off. Serbia could not accept such unilateral measures which further deteriorated the quality of life of the Serbian population in Kosovo and Metohija. Their lifting the tariffs is the key precondition for the dialogue to continue. Furthermore, Pristina's decisions to establish a so-called "ministry of defence" and to transform the "Kosovo security force" into an armed force are unacceptable to Serbia, as they are both detrimental to the process of Belgrade-Pristina dialogue and a threat to the stability of the entire region. In such circumstances, the presence of UNMIK in the Serbian southern Province is highly important as a guarantor of Serbian and other non-Albanian population's security. In this context, it is incumbent upon me to stress the importance of KFOR presence as the only legitimate military force in Kosovo and Metohija, and at the same time the

guarantor of security and survival of Serbs.

Serbia is committed to fostering the traditionally good relations with friendly countries, but also to promoting cooperation with partners in the international community whom with we do not share views, respecting a diversity of opinion and adhering to the fundamental principles of international law.

In the relations with the United States of America we have achieved a tangible success - a successful visit by President Vucic to Washington, D.C. was recently realized and President Trump was also invited to visit Serbia.

The traditionally good relations with the Russian Federation are based on the spiritual and cultural closeness of the two peoples. The Russian Federation has supported our national interests, they do not recognize the unilaterally declared independence of "Kosovo", while supporting the safeguarding of UNSC Resolution 1244 and efforts to prevent Pristina from joining international organization, as an important partner of Serbia in many other fields as well, particularly the energy sector. That the relations with the People's Republic of China have been a success story is evidenced in the fact that Serbia is currently the country implementing the largest number of joint projects with China in Central and Eastern Europe. I wish to take this opportunity to express Serbia's solidarity with China following the coronavirus outbreak, as demonstrated through provision of relevant humanitarian aid and my recent visit to Beijing, which was very well received by the Chinese officials. We also continue the good cooperation carried out with countries of Africa, Asia, Latin America and the Caribbean. It is highly important that Serbia remains active in re-establishing ties and dialogue with many of the countries we have not been in contact with for a long while. At the same time, we are working to establish diplomatic relations with the few countries we have not forged them with yet.

Our country has always been a strong advocate for multilateralism and respect for international principles and norms in overcoming the serious challenges of today, such as terrorism, the rising cyber crime, threats to energy security, migration, epidemics, humanitarian disasters, poverty, climate change and many more. Aware of its geostrategic position, Serbia shares the concerns voiced by modern society regarding all of these security challenges and threats, which have long gone beyond the national level. Adherence to the Charter of the United Nations is of crucial importance to us as we continue to take part in the work of the United Nations, OSCE, the Council of Europe and other international and regional organizations and initiatives and contribute to the strengthening of peace and stability in the region, Europe and the world at large. This year marks the 75th anniversary since the establishment of the largest and most important international organization - the United Nations, and Serbia as its member state stands ready to contribute to the observance of this important anniversary.

Promotion of cooperation and preservation of peace and security in the region have been among the key foreign policy priorities of Serbia. The most recent example of our country's engagement in this context is the initiative commonly referred to as the "mini-Schengen", launched at the initiative of the President of the Republic of Serbia Aleksandar Vucic, aiming to facilitate the movement of people, goods, services and capital and, thus, deepen the regional economic area of the Western Balkans. In order to contribute to a successful regional

cooperation all of the regional participants are expected to strictly adhere to the agreements concluded, as this is conducive to a favourable climate for cooperation in many areas of common interest. As a good example of cooperation in the Western Balkans, I would like to point out Serbia's participation in the work of the Central European Initiative, as the longest-running regional initiative in South East Europe, as well as in the regional frameworks addressing migration, asylum and refugee issues, the Regional Cooperation Council, South-East Europe Cooperation Process, the Western Balkans Fund, etc.

I would like to underline that full membership of the European Union remains one of the strategic foreign policy goals of our country. Aware of the problems and challenges facing the EU today, such as Brexit, internal reforms and "enlargement fatigue", we believe that the process of European integration should unfold on a faster pace. Since 2014 until now, Serbia has opened 18 out of 35 negotiating chapters and submitted negotiating positions for 5 more chapters. The dynamic of chapters being opened should preferably reflect the dynamic of the negotiating process and Serbia has great expectations from the EU-Western Balkans Summit in this context, planned for May this year in Zagreb. We are encouraged by the fact that Serbia, as a country having made great strides in the accession talks, will be able to choose whether to use the new EU accession methodology or not, but what is crucial to us is that the efforts we have made so far be valorized in a proper way. We have followed the reports and recommendations issued by the European Commission and continue to, as we have done so far, devote special attention to the rule of law, i.e., chapters 23 and 24.

However, Serbia's European path will largely depend on chapter 35 which concerns progress in the Belgrade-Pristina dialogue and has a major impact on the course of the entire process, given that it is a precondition for further steps in other areas as well. Notwithstanding, we will continue along the reform path in Serbia, harmonizing national regulations with European standards, regardless of the dynamic characterizing the negotiating process, as we believe that this is the interest of all our citizens supporting modernization and all-round prosperity of the country.

Dear students of Belgrade and Nis universities,

In these tumultuous times, I thought that I was obliged to address you, as young and knowledgeable individuals with a future ahead, and inform you about the importance and priorities of Serbia in the international arena. I sincerely hope that I have largely succeeded in doing so with this lecture, given that many of you, as experts in your professions to be, will have an opportunity to defend the interests of our country or even take part in the realization of its foreign policy goals.

I wish you every success in your work and personal well-being, and to our guests from Nis a pleasant stay in Belgrade.

Thank you for your attention!"