



First Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Serbia Ivica Dacic who appeared as a guest in "Oko" program, said that the opening of U.S. International Development Finance Corporation (DFC) in Belgrade and today's talks on projects during the visit of Richard Grenell, represent a major step forward. This is proof that the U.S. is willing to follow through the agreements reached and that it is not just a pre-election stunt.

Minister Dacic said that today's event i.e. the talks and the agreements cannot be viewed separately but as part of the implementation of the Washington agreement.

"Starting from what was signed and agreed, Grenell undertook to implement the first steps", Foreign Minister said adding that opening of DFC office in Belgrade was a major event.

He emphasized how important it was to bypass politics and give priority to economy and bread-and-butter issues in relations between Belgrade and Pristina and that Grenell's "boundless energy is setting the pace". Minister Dacic said that these are all important issues as is the strengthening of political ties with the U.S. He recalled that the next year we shall mark 140th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations with the U.S.

"Whether we worked hard enough to develop these relations in the meantime is debatable. Even today we are not satisfied with the volume of foreign trade but this is a huge step forward and proof of U.S. willingness to follow through the agreements reached and not just a pre-election stunt," Minister Dacic said.

Referring to the political part of the agreement signed in Washington, Minister Dacic indicated the importance of removing the threat of mutual recognition from the agreement. He also said that President Vucic and he told White House special representative Grenell that Pristina in the meantime acted contrary to the agreement. They also told him that they may show him a letter sent by Kosovo Foreign Minister to her Bosnia and Herzegovina counterpart urging them to recognize Kosovo independence, only four days after the Washington agreement.

Minister Dacic said that a big question remains whether it is better for Serbia to seek a political solution to the Kosovo issue with EU or U.S. mediation.

"It appears to me that it was easier to discuss this issue with the U.S. Administration in view of

the German and other EU states' position who consider that everything should stay as it is and that Serbia should recognize Kosovo independence while the U.S. Administration has a more flexible position proceeding from the interests of both peoples," Dacic said.

Minister Dacic said that the template for political solution to the Kosovo issue should proceed from the 1995 Dayton Accords and the Washington agreement between Serbia and Kosovo on normalization of economic relations of 4 September.

"According to the template, pressure needs to be exerted on the side refusing to accept a proper solution. This is what the EU lacks, it lacks an iron fist. EU has been offering long ago what the U.S. is offering now, but what did it ask in return? They are not able to make Pristina implement what was agreed in 2013", Minister Dacic said.

He added that we should be moving towards acceptance of "a just solution" because economy alone cannot resolve a political problem. As for the role of the USA in reaching Serbia-Kosovo Washington agreement, the Foreign Minister said that the "EU was not appreciating" this initiative and certainly not the success of another mediator.

In commenting the initiative to have the building of the Ministry of Defense and of the General Staff restored jointly, Minister Dacic added that Serbia repeatedly told NATO that it would be good if they took part in this effort. Still, it was up to the Government to make a decision whether to restore these buildings for military or some other purposes, like hotels.