



Minister of Foreign Affairs Nikola Selakovic said today in Antalya that the Republic of Serbia, being a candidate for membership in the European Union, devotes great attention to the advancement of regional cooperation and good-neighboring relations, which it deems an inextricable part of its European integration process.

"For its part, Serbia has taken decisive steps to align its legislation with EU regulations, implementing very concrete reforms to fully become an area of freedom, security and justice. At the same time, together with other participants from Southeast Europe, Serbia has built a space of trust and mutual understanding so that this geopolitical area would mature together in response to common challenges and problems", Minister Selakovic said.

Addressing the participants of the informal meeting of South East European Cooperation Process (SEECP) foreign ministers, entitled "Ways for Strengthening Cooperation in South East Europe Based on the COVID-19 Pandemic Experience of the Region", Minister Selakovic noted that we find ourselves at a point where the process of European integration of the Western Balkans is irreversible.

"I can proudly say that, with the help of our European partners, the highest level of mutual respect and understanding has been reached today, which was especially visible during the first months of not only regional but global crisis caused by the COVID-19 pandemic", Minister Selakovic said.

The Serbian Foreign Minister expressed his belief that the region, owing to its readiness to provide a joint response to global challenges such as the pandemic, has capacities to do a lot more, as demonstrated through many regional projects, many of which were the outcome of agreements reached in the framework of the Berlin Process.

The Minister said that the new Serbian Government will cooperate with regional partners and continue its activities towards the implementation of the "mini-Schengen" initiative, in line with the Berlin Process.

"This initiative is actually a way to accelerate the Berlin Process, aiming to create conditions conducive to reconciliation and establishment of good-neighbourly relations in the region, as a basis for ensuring strong economies and achieving better standards of living for all in the Western Balkans. At the same time, the establishment of four key freedoms that the European

Union itself is based on will result in a faster economic growth in the region", Minister Selakovic said.

According to the Minister preferential cooperation in the field of health-care among SEECP participants is still an uncharted territory in view of available capacities.

"The Republic of Serbia remains open for all constructive proposals that may contribute to cooperation and understanding so that all SEECP participants may identify not only common interests, since they have already been mostly defined, but come up with joint mechanisms to respond to the challenges facing our region", Minister Selakovic said in conclusion.