



First Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Serbia Ivica Dacic held a regular monthly press conference at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs today.

“The activities of this Ministry in the previous month were focused on preventing the so-called Republic of Kosovo from joining UNESCO and on seeking solutions, together with our European and international partners, to the migration crisis. In October, I participated in the 66th Session of the Executive Committee of the Office of the United Nations Commissioner for Refugees, in Geneva (5 October) and the Conference on the Eastern Mediterranean - Western Balkans Route, Luxembourg, 8 October.

This year’s Executive Committee session was held in specific circumstances caused by massive mixed migratory movements. Flows of people from Syria, as well as other areas of the Middle East, Asia and Africa, fleeing the brutality of armed conflicts and terrorist attacks, have sought shelter in other states, hoping for solidarity and protection. One of the key factors of the massive movements of people that we are facing, in addition to conflicts, terrorism and political instability, is also poverty and the quest for a better life. The problem is not of a recent date and we are all aware that its resolution will take time. For this reason, I underlined the need for resolute and responsible action of the entire international community in order to define the short-term, as well as the long-term solutions both in respect of providing emergency humanitarian assistance and eliminating the root causes of mass migration. It is necessary to agree, as soon as possible, and particularly on the EU level, a comprehensive, sustainable solution that would also include transit countries along the Western Balkans route. We wish to be part of the common solution and are ready to take our share of responsibility as soon as the European Union agrees the strategy for addressing the migrant crisis. Serbia will continue to be a credible EU partner and will continue to treat migrants in a manner which is in full compliance with the European and international standards. Furthermore, Serbia has committed itself to active participation in the implementation of whatever is agreed upon, including comprehensive border management. I must underscore that Serbia is on one of the major routes of the large influx of migrants. From the beginning of the year until today, Serbian state border was crossed by more than 170,000 migrants, which is five times more than in 2014. The fact that a total of some 600 asylum applications were submitted indicates that the desired destination for refugees and migrants is not Serbia, but EU Member States. The Government of the Republic of Serbia has demonstrated at all levels its readiness to face, within the limits of its capabilities, the situation based on the huge inflow of migrants and do its part of the job. We are making our

best effort to provide the migrants, during their stay in Serbia, appropriate reception, assistance in food and medication, temporary accommodation, health care, including information on the asylum procedure, while fully respecting their human rights. I recall that, recognizing the need for urgent and coordinated action, the Government of Serbia set up, on 18 June 2015, a Working Group for addressing the problem of mixed migratory flows, whereas it adopted in early September an Action Plan in case of increased inflow of migrants and the decision on opening a separate escrow account for donations earmarked for migrants. Not only Serbia, but no state can bear such a heavy burden on its own. Our capacities for catering to such needs are limited not only in terms of funding and human resources, but accommodation as well. What is equally important is that we are making extraordinary efforts to intensify border control, prevent criminal activity of people smugglers and traffickers intending to benefit from the misfortune of these people who are in plight. Serbia believes that the complex challenge that we are currently facing cannot be addressed by partial and local steps such as closing of borders, blocking freight transport and building fences, but in cooperation with states, unified response by the European Union as a whole and the engagement of the entire international community.

Serbian people are sensitive to the problems of people coming from the crisis areas of the Middle East, Asia and Africa particularly because it was not long ago that its own people were forced to migrate to save their lives in the face of war developments.

I recalled that Serbia, unfortunately, has a vast and painful experience with refugees and internally displaced persons. Today, Serbia is home to 44,000 people from Croatia and Bosnia and Herzegovina with a refugee status, and has already been catering for them for two decades, as well as to 200,000 internally displaced persons who were forced to leave Kosovo and Metohija after 1999.

Experience has taught us that there is no simple, administrative solution to the refugee problem. For this reason, Serbia did not accept the UNHCR recommendation of April 2014 concerning refugee status cessation for persons who fled from Croatia in the 1992-1995 period. Our position is supported by the fact that a year-and-a-half after the recommendation was released, refugees from Croatia are still faced with serious obstacles to exercising their tenancy rights and pensions, house reconstruction, return of agricultural land, use of script, employment in state institutions, etc. Furthermore, we are concerned about intensified incidents, discrimination and hate speech against members of the Serbian minority in Croatia, including returnees. A logical consequence is that the great majority of refugees from Croatia are opting for local integration in Serbia because, essentially, return in the form of a durable solution, is not available to them. Serbia expects that the second UNHCR semi-annual report, whose submission we anticipated last May, will objectively present the situation on the ground and be circulated to all the UN Executive Committee Member States.

Serbia attaches great importance to the regional process of addressing refugee problems, including their needs and full observance of their rights, as well as full implementation of the Regional Housing Programme. This process is important both from the aspect of resolving the problems of refugees, as well as the regional reconciliation process. I must recall that, after 16 year of international presence in Kosovo and Metohija, out of more than 200,000 internally displaced persons, less than 5% returned to the Province, out of these only half achieved a

sustainable return. I must further recall that under UN Security Council resolution 1244, ensuring the conditions for a safe and free return of displaced persons is one of the major tasks of the international presence in KiM. Obstacles standing in the way of sustainable return to Kosmet include, among other things, bad security and economic situation; lack of effective protection of rights; impossibility of returning estates and using the devastated and usurped property; aggravated access to public services, impossibility of using mother tongue, etc. Serbia expects that, through joint efforts, we will be able to achieve better results in finding just, durable solutions for this population.

As regards the request by so-called Kosovo for admission to UNESCO membership and the recommendation of the UNESCO Executive Board for Kosovo's admission to this Organization (21 October), Serbia should continue its efforts against such admission, since there are great chances that the recommendation for Kosovo's joining of this Organization will be dismissed by the UNESCO General Conference in November. Serbia's reaction should not be irrational and our endeavours should continue, as this is still an open issue.

In the same way that led to an unprecedented inclusion of this item in the agenda without any discussion, the Executive Board adopted the recommendation on Kosovo's admission to this Organization. As I have already pointed out the vote demonstrated significant divisions both in the international community and in UNESCO.

You are aware that decisions in the Executive Board are adopted by a simple majority, disregarding abstentions and those who walked outside the conference hall, whereas adoption of decisions at the General Conference requires a two-thirds majority. Although the annotated General Conference agenda has not yet been finalized, it is likely that the item will come up between 7 and 10 November. I will speak at the General Conference on 4 December and there will certainly be a debate.

The entire state leadership is doing its utmost in respect of this issue, while the President, the Prime Minister and I will continue our talks with a number of leaders worldwide. This year, we have also marked the 70th anniversary of the United Nations. As you know, the United Nations was established in San Francisco, in 1945. It was founded on the vestiges of the Second World War in order to protect mankind from the horrors of war and destruction, and ensure conditions for prosperous economic and social development, and the respect of universal human rights. The UN was created by 51 states, including Yugoslavia. Today, the Organization embraces 193 members, making it truly a world Organization.

The Republic of Serbia attaches exceptional importance to the work of the United Nations, whose principle and goals it fully respects and supports. It is clear that violation of the UN Charter cannot bring anything good. Regrettable, there have been situations in the past seventy years when the principles of the Charter were not honoured, which we experienced ourselves. Violation of international law creates enormous problems for the international community and mankind, leading to dangerous precedents.

At this particular point in time, we are witnessing another example of an utterly unacceptable violation of international law and the UN Charter. This is related to the recommendation by the

UNESCO Executive Board concerning the request for admission of so-called Republic of Kosovo to UNESCO membership. By all diplomatic means, Serbia is opposing this kind of abuse of an organization within the UN system as a political instrument affirming the illegal unilateral declaration of independence of a part of the territory of a UN Member State, whose sovereignty and territorial integrity are guaranteed by the still valid and legally binding UN Security Council resolution 1244.

By opposing this act, Serbia is defending international law, the UN Charter and the supreme authority of the Security Council in the realm of safeguarding international peace and security, but also moral integrity and responsibility of UNESCO towards cultural heritage. These principles must be fully abided by, for this is the only way to preserve the existing system of international relations, based on the United Nations Charter, as well as the universal validity of international law.

In October, I had a meeting with Philip Hammond (8 October), Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland. The talks focused on the prospects of strengthening bilateral relations between the UK and Serbia, Serbia's progress in the negotiations with the EU, the role of Serbia in the region, challenges of the migration crisis caused by the heavy influx and transit of refugees from the Middle East, and the continuation of dialogue between Belgrade and Pristina and the implementation of the reached agreements.

I have to underline that the preparations for the OSCE Ministerial Council are well underway. The Council will be held in Belgrade, from 1-4 December. The Ministerial Council is the highest level of decision-making and the place where major decisions are adopted. Invitations have been sent out to the Foreign Ministers of all the 57 participating States, 11 Mediterranean and Asian Partners for Cooperation, including heads of major international organizations. The Ministry has already held two briefings with representatives of the participating States and Partners for Cooperation of the Organization – one in Vienna (6 October) and the other in Belgrade (15 October).

As regards the activities for the coming month, I will be visiting, in the capacity as the OSCE Chairman-in-Office, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Turkmenistan, from 9-15 November. During my visit to the countries of Central Asia, I will have the opportunity to discuss bilateral topics.

I will represent the Republic of Serbia at the UN Security Council session in New York, in November 2015, where the UN Secretary-General's Report on the UNMIK's work from 16 July – 15 October 2015 will be discussed.

The work of the UN Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK) is reviewed regularly in the UN Security Council, where the UN Secretary General's quarterly reports on the work of this UN Mission are presented.

I am expected to sign with Resident Coordinator of the UN Country Team in Serbia, Irena Vojackova Sollorano, in November, the "Development Partnership Framework for 2016-2020 between the Government of the Republic of Serbia and the United Nations Country Team in Serbia". This is a strategic document laying the foundations for assistance and support of the

system of the United Nations and the United Nations agencies to the overall economic and social development of the Republic of Serbia in the next five years”, stated Foreign Minister Dacic.