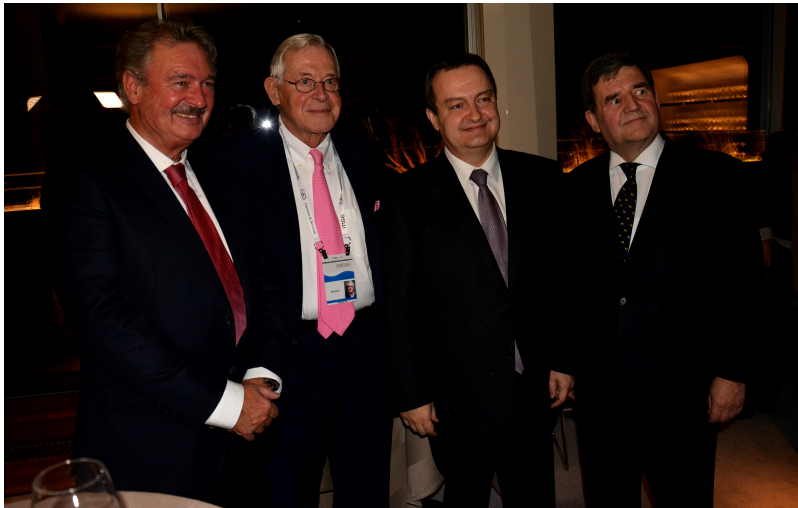




First Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Serbia Ivica Dacic is on a visit to Munich, participating in the 52nd Munich Security Conference.

Minister Dacic yesterday took part in "The Security Times Press Lounge". The event shared the experiences of both current and former OSCE chairmanships and EU Presidencies, in the context of diplomatic challenges facing Europe today.

"It was the crisis in and around Ukraine that, to a degree, shifted the focus of the European political scene back to the OSCE. For many years, it was thought that this organization had no real role to play in the European security system. However, Serbia's Chairmanship had to face two major problems, one stemming from the crisis in and around Ukraine and the other arising from the terrorist attacks in Paris, as well as the migrant crisis in the second half of the year.

Last year also marked the 40th anniversary of the Helsinki Final Act, on which occasion the Troika established the Panel of Eminent Persons, headed by Ambassador Ischinger. The Panel was tasked to shape a future for the European security system, and that of the OSCE itself.

Among the significant results achieved under Serbia's Chairmanship is extension of the mandate of the OSCE Special Monitoring Mission in Ukraine (SMMU) from six months to a year. Since the SMMU term will expire on 31 March, the current German Chairmanship is to see to it that the mandate is extended. May I recall that the OSCE decision-making process is driven by consensus.

The package of measures related to the implementation of the Minsk agreements had been agreed during Serbia's Chairmanship, but was not fully implemented. I believe that the core problem lies in the lack of political will to declare the end of conflict and transition to peace. I participated in the Minsk negotiations myself and noted that participants came to the table without being fully authorized to reach agreement. It is not possible to come to an agreement in this way. The negotiators must be ready and capable of reaching an agreement. I have first-hand experience of this, as I participated in the dialogue with Pristina, together with incumbent Prime Minister Vucic. We had to make decisions, whereas such political will does not exist in the case of Ukraine.

Luckily, no crisis that emerged over the past ten years has arisen in the Balkans. Neither has the economic crisis, international terrorism nor the migrant crisis originated in the Balkans. However, there is a likelihood that Serbia might fall victim as a result of its sensitive geography and of having the EU – Greece, Bulgaria, Romania, in its neighbourhood. Migrants come to your countries from the Middle East and Africa, while those coming to Serbia actually come from the EU. I wonder how long we will have to be the victim of your inability to protect your own external borders.

Serbia honours its international obligations and respects Germany's position on migrants, but Serbia will not accept that all other countries close their borders, letting migrants eventually remain in Serbia. That will not be possible", stated Minister Dacic at "The Security Times Press Lounge" event.