



In his capacity as current Chairman of the South-East European Cooperation Process (SEECP), Minister of Foreign and European Affairs of the Republic of Croatia Davor Ivo Stier invited First Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Serbia Ivica Dacic to participate in an informal meeting of SEECP Foreign Ministers, to take place in Zagreb on 3 March 2017.

Taking into account what Croatia's Foreign and European Affairs Minister Davor Stier most recently stated in public, failing to conform to the basic principles of respect for good-neighbourly relations and promotion of regional cooperation and, thus, jeopardizing the achieved level of trust and understanding of fundamental values of cooperation and respect for national integrity, First Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Serbia Ivica Dacic cancelled his attendance of the upcoming meeting in Zagreb.

The Government of the Republic of Serbia and First Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs Ivica Dacic have repeatedly underlined their commitment to further promoting cooperation in the region and preserving regional stability. The role played by Serbia in this process was estimated as key by the European Union and many other partners, while Serbia was on several occasions described as the anchor of stability in the region.

In contrast, concrete actions of the Republic of Croatia, which formally supports European integration of the region and strengthening of regional cooperation, have shown its aspirations to the contrary, which must be noted with regret.

Unlike the period of its EU membership talks, the Republic of Croatia has, as an EU Member State, behaved in a manner violating the fundamental values of the EU and the postulates the Union was built upon. Serbia has repeatedly pointed out that it is necessary that Croatian authorities distanced themselves from the attempts aimed at rehabilitating the Independent State of Croatia (NDH), which went down in history as a fascist Ustasha polity, leaders of which committed numerous atrocious crimes and genocide against persons belonging to Serbian, Jewish and Roma peoples. This is reflected not only through the rehabilitation of Stepinac, but also through using Ustasha salute "for homeland ready", streets being named after Ustasha

minister Mile Budak, a monument erected to Ustasha terrorist Barisic, etc.

Reactions of Croatian officials in this context, primarily of the Minister of Foreign and European Affairs Davor Stier, have shown a considerable a critical attitude, however not towards the atrocities committed during the NDH, but to the very opposite – legitimate requests of the Republic of Serbia that the Republic of Croatia, as an EU Member State, distance itself from such a past and sanction any attempt of revisionism of Ustasha politics.

The Republic of Serbia is a country which contributed greatly to defeating fascism in the Second World War, and which, unlike the NDH, was one of the victorious Allied powers. Serbia has never abandoned such a policy nor will it ever do so. To us, this is a matter of values over which there must be no compromise.

Despite all the above, we are deeply convinced that even diverging perceptions of history should not be an obstacle to mutual relations and that it is necessary for us to focus on issues of common interest, working together in many spheres with only one guiding principle – to move forward looking into the future and not the past.