



Permanent Mission of the Republic of Serbia to the OSCE
and other International Organizations in Vienna

**Draft Statement by First Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign
Affairs Ivica Dacic at the OSCE Ministerial Council in Łódź**

Distinguished Chairman,

Excellencies,

Esteemed colleagues,

At the outset, I wish to express my gratitude to Poland for its hospitality and chairmanship, and to congratulate you, Minister Rau, on the organization of the Ministerial Council in Łódź.

From year to year, the meetings of the Ministerial Council are held in increasingly challenging and complex conditions. This year we gathered at a difficult moment for our Organization, because we are facing the war in Ukraine, the consequences of which are changing the perception and view of collective security. Today, when we face increasingly complex challenges that require togetherness, and when it is precisely multilateralism and joint action that are prerequisite for every, or any, collective success, it appears that we have never been further apart. All this has its impact on the OSCE as an organization, because unfortunately I have to state that the Organization's influence is eroding due to the lack of political will and openness to engage in a constructive and substantive dialogue in resolving open issues. The OSCE needs to be an open platform for direct communication of all its participating States regardless of the circumstances, because otherwise we are creating a climate of deep mistrust, losing the possibility of dialogue and shutting down communication channels. By firmly following our own interests, we encourage divisions and the creation of groups that already have devastating consequences for the world as a whole. At this time, it is especially important to look at the bigger picture and focus all our attention on connecting through our similarities instead of identifying our differences. The future of this organization and overall global progress will always depend on our willingness to cooperate and find a common language.

Taking into account that Serbia held the OSCE Chairmanship-in-Office in 2015, as well as that I had the honour of chairing the Ministerial Council meeting in Belgrade, I am fully aware of the challenges we face, but I am also aware of the contribution that this Organization is able to and needs to make. We advocate the strengthening and use of a wide range of OSCE mechanisms. We believe that the existing capacities should be used to the maximum, while returning to the core principles.

The Helsinki Final Act, adopted almost 50 years ago, during the Cold War, with its ten principles contributed to making the world a safer place. I believe that the upcoming marking of the fiftieth anniversary of our Organization will be an opportunity that should not be missed, in order to determine what we have achieved, but also to jointly define the directions of future development. It is especially necessary to review the spheres and define the ways in which this Organization could act more effectively in the politico-military, economic and environmental, and human dimensions.

Ladies and gentlemen,

Developments in the OSCE area also have an impact on the region of Southeast Europe which is already burdened with accumulated problems that have been neglected for years now.

I need to draw your attention to the particularly worrying security situation in Kosovo and Metohija. Provisional institutions of self-government in Pristina have been consciously and continuously sabotaging efforts aimed at finding compromise solutions, and it is particularly alarming that Pristina not only rejects Belgrade's good will and commitment to dialogue, but ignores calls from the European Union and the entire international community. The last in a series of indicators of Pristina's destructive actions was the issue of license plates, which appears to be of a technical nature and which is used by the current leadership of the Albanians from Kosovo and Metohija in an attempt to avoid their obligations such as the formation of the Community of Serb Municipalities, and generally renders meaningless the mechanism of EU facilitated dialogue. At the same time, Pristina continues to exert pressure on the non-Albanian and especially on the Serb community with the ultimate goal of expelling non-Albanians from the territory of Kosovo and Metohija. In addition, Pristina's attempts to politicize the war in Ukraine and use the current situation to play the role of the victim and fulfill its political goals are particularly alarming and disgraceful. I wish to emphasize that, for its part, Serbia remains committed to the peace and stability of the Western Balkan region and that it is necessary to find exclusively compromise solutions for the existing problems.

Ladies and gentlemen,

Serbia is committed to improving cooperation and relations with neighboring countries with a special focus on economic cooperation and building a better common future. As a good example of this effort, I would single out the Open Balkan initiative, which, apart from Serbia, has so far been joined by Albania and North Macedonia.

Serbia pays special attention to regional initiatives which we see as an instrument for getting closer to the European Union and its full membership, it being our strategic commitment. We highly value the role and concrete contribution of OSCE mechanisms to improving regional cooperation. We will continue, together with our neighbors, to develop concrete economic and infrastructure projects, bearing in mind that dialogue, cooperation and respect for spheres of interest are the only way to find sustainable solutions for all open issues in the region.

In conclusion, I would like to thank Poland once again for its efforts invested in the course of this year. Let me also take this opportunity to wish our neighbor, North Macedonia, every success and offer our full support during their Chairmanship-in-Office in 2023.