

# SERBIA'S LEADERSHIP OF THE OSCE

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## HEARING BEFORE THE COMMISSION ON SECURITY AND COOPERATION IN EUROPE ONE HUNDRED FOURTEENTH CONGRESS FIRST SESSION

FEBRUARY 25, 2015

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## **SERBIA'S LEADERSHIP OF THE OSCE**

**FEBRUARY 25, 2015**

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## SERBIA'S LEADERSHIP OF THE OSCE

February 25, 2015

COMMISSION ON SECURITY AND COOPERATION IN EUROPE  
WASHINGTON, DC

The hearing was held at 2:40 p.m. in room 2200, Rayburn House Office Building, Washington, DC, Hon. Christopher H. Smith, Chairman, Commission on Security and Cooperation in Europe, presiding.

*Commissioners present:* Hon. Christopher H. Smith, Chairman, Commission on Security and Cooperation in Europe; Hon. Alcee L. Hastings, Ranking Member, Commission on Security and Cooperation in Europe; Hon. Benjamin L. Cardin, Ranking Member, Commission on Security and Cooperation in Europe; Hon. Joseph R. Pitts, Commissioner, Commission on Security and Cooperation in Europe; and Hon. Steve Cohen, Commissioner, Commission on Security and Cooperation in Europe.

*Witnesses present:* Ivica Dačić, Chairperson-in-Office of the OSCE, First Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs, Republic of Serbia.

### HON. CHRISTOPHER H. SMITH, CHAIRMAN, COMMISSION ON SECURITY AND COOPERATION IN EUROPE

The Commission will come to order, and good afternoon to everybody. I want to welcome everyone joining us this afternoon, especially to His Excellency, First Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs Ivica Dačić, who is also the Chairman-in-Office for the OSCE.

Your chairmanship this year of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) comes at a moment of tragedy, of tremendous human suffering in the region. One OSCE member, the Russian Government, is tearing the heart out of a neighboring member, as we all know, Ukraine.

Today there are more than 5,600 dead and almost 1.5 million internally displaced persons in Ukraine, with no end in sight. Russian weapons, special forces and all sorts of shady Russian-led mercenaries, proxies and criminal gangs are creating vast ill-defined and constantly shifting zones of outright war, lower-level conflict and chaos.

These zones are home to millions of men, women and children who live there, or at least try to. Only a few days ago, Bishop Shevchuk, patriarch of the Ukrainian Catholic Church, called it the greatest humanitarian catastrophe in Eastern Europe since the end of World War II.

Your Excellency, we will look forward to hearing from you today about what the OSCE, under your chairmanship, proposes to do to respond to the humanitarian needs—of course, some of this you're already doing—and to the Russian aggression. We'll be especially interested to hear about the special monetary mission and the Minsk agreements.

Although the latest Minsk agreements were signed only two weeks ago, there are already serious violations. For example, last week the people of the rail town Debaltsevo were subject to shelling and their city was captured, in violation of the Minsk agreements. Russia and its proxies must adhere to the Minsk agreements and immediately stop all cease-fire violations, allow OSCE monitors access to where they need to be, and withdraw heavy weapons from the front lines.

Understanding that the OSCE is a consensus organization, meaning that the Russian Government has an effective veto over many significant actions, we believe the OSCE is still able and responsible to speak the truth about the conflict to find ways to mitigate it and to help the people of Ukraine.

Our government will support you in this, I can assure you. They already are. And certainly the Co-Chairman, Roger Wicker, Ranking Senator Ben Cardin, who is here and was in Ukraine several months ago—all of us together will do everything we can to support you, Mr. Chairman.

I look forward to also hearing about fighting human trafficking and anti-Semitism, issues that we discussed when we met last week at the Winter Meeting of the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly. In my capacity as the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly Special Representative for Human Trafficking Issues, I hope to be able to work with you and to update internal OSCE regulations so that, "No activities of the OSCE executive structures, including contracts for goods and services, contribute to any form of trafficking in persons." That was agreed on, as you know, at the Kyiv ministerial decision in 2013. I look forward to the support of the Serbian chairmanship to ensure institutional commitment from the OSCE that matches the magnitude of the challenge we face in combating modern-day slavery.

To speak for a moment about domestic issues in Serbia, I know that we spoke about this the other day. But it is important that we all take a lead—whether it be in the United States or in Serbia or anywhere else—to combat human trafficking.

Again, I recommend that you and your staff look very carefully at the Trafficking in Persons (TIP) Report put out by the U.S. Department of State. It is a very fine statement of what is actually going on, on the prevention side, the prosecution side of traffickers, and the protection for the victims.

We also look forward to working with you on implementing the recommendations of the Berlin +10 Conference, to make sure that the escalating anti-Semitism that is happening throughout Europe, and really throughout the world, is combated as robustly as humanly possible. I'd like to now yield to Mr. Hastings.

**HON. ALCEE L. HASTINGS, RANKING MEMBER, COMMISSION  
ON SECURITY AND COOPERATION IN EUROPE**

Mr. Chairman, in light of time I'd like to welcome our presenter, but I have to go to the Rules Committee shortly, so I'll defer to Senator Cardin and look forward to hearing from our witness.

**HON. BENJAMIN L. CARDIN, RANKING MEMBER, COMMISSION  
ON SECURITY AND COOPERATION IN EUROPE**

Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Mr. Chair-in-Office, thank you very much for your commitment to the OSCE. You have major responsibilities in Serbia, and yet you find time to use your leadership to help the OSCE. We are very appreciative of that.

I apologize, because I'm not going to be able to stay very long. We have a major problem on the floor of the United States Senate dealing with the funding of our homeland security, but I wanted to be here to underscore the bipartisan support for the Helsinki Commission and the OSCE and the bicameral support, the Senate and the House, in the work of the OSCE and the Helsinki Commission.

All three baskets are critical at this time. Congressman Smith mentioned the challenge we have on security with the Russian incursion into Ukraine, taking over Crimea and the problems in eastern Ukraine. It doesn't end there; Russian incursions in Georgia and their interference in Moldova are fundamental challenges to the principles of the OSCE and must be one of your highest priorities.

On the economic and environmental front, we have challenges with energy; we have global climate issues. You'll have a full opportunity to advance your regional interests in the economic and environmental side. On human rights, which has really been, I think, a hallmark of the OSCE, we are proud of the work that the U.S. Helsinki Commission has done. I thank Chairman Smith for his commitment to ridding the world of modern-day slavery and trafficking in persons, and his role as an OSCE PA special representative in that regard.

We are proud of the work the OSCE has done on tolerance and the three personal representatives of the chair that deal with the tolerance agenda. We are proud of the initiatives on transparency to deal with corruption, including in the extractive industries. And we are pleased of the efforts that have been made to deal with individual human rights violators, which we call the Magnitsky sanctions here in our country. All of these initiatives have been worked under the Helsinki Commission and the OSCE.

We strongly support the work of the Office of Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR) and look forward to the advancement of the human rights issues. The OSCE monitoring missions are critically important to regional security. And the election monitoring is a critical function in making sure that we have free and fair elections.

Mr. Chairman, I was last week in Central America. I had a chance to meet with some that will be involved in Panama, where the Summit of the Americas will take place in April under the auspices of the Organization of American States (OAS). OAS, like OSCE, is a regional organization that operates by consensus. And

I must tell you, they were envious of the effectiveness of OSCE versus OAS. I tried to tell them about the bureaucracy in Vienna, but they still felt that we had an advantage.

There's an interesting difference between the OSCE and the OAS. That is the parliamentary dimension. We have strong parliamentary interests in the work of the OSCE, which I think has paid major dividends to the effectiveness of the organization. I congratulate Representative Alcee Hastings for being the president of the Parliamentary Assembly and his leadership in the Mediterranean partners; Representative Chris Smith, who's had a special position in regards to trafficking; Representative Robert Aderholt, who was the vice president; Senator Roger Wicker, who's taken on a leadership position; and others. So we think you should utilize the fact that parliamentarians are there to help implement the policies of the OSCE.

And then lastly, let me mention that every chair-in-office brings to that position a unique opportunity because of the country that you come from. Serbia is in a critical position to help us resolve some long-standing problems within the OSCE region. Under your chairmanship, we hope we can advance the long-standing concerns in Bosnia and Kosovo. It would be a major accomplishment during your chairmanship to move these issues forward.

Lastly, as you know, the Helsinki Commission is famous for mentioning individual cases. We think that by mentioning individual cases, we really do advance the principles of the OSCE. In Serbia's case, the unresolved accountability for the Bytyqi brothers massacre needs to be resolved. And we would urge you to give this matter prompt and immediate attention to bring those responsible to justice for this tragedy.

Bottom line, we're here to work with you and we very much appreciate you taking the time to meet with our Commission.

Mr. SMITH. Senator Cardin, thank you very much for your strong statement and for your leadership. I'd like to now yield to Representative Joe Pitts.

**HON. JOSEPH R. PITTS, COMMISSIONER, COMMISSION ON  
SECURITY AND COOPERATION IN EUROPE**

Thank you, Mr. Chairman, for holding this important hearing on Serbia's leadership of the OSCE. And I'd also like to thank Foreign Minister Dačić for your attendance on behalf of your government. I think the topic warrants a representative such as yourself. I thank you for making the journey and appearing before us.

It is a real testament to the OSCE, as well as to the Serbian Government following its transition from the Milošević regime, that we are in the position to hold this meeting. Serbia's Chairmanship reflects the organization's commitment to democratic principles and processes, and reflects a sincerity in respecting the rights of its member states. Furthermore, in many ways Serbia has reciprocated this respect via its cooperative approach to the OSCE field mission within its territory. This juxtaposes greatly with the other member states that also possess field missions.

Our respective governments have much to work on bilaterally as well as in the multinational framework of the OSCE; however, I am very hopeful that the chairmanship can yield progress on both



fronts—redress for past incidents against Americans, American interests, as well as independence of the media, the rights of minorities, victims of trafficking are some of the issues that deserve considerable attention from the Serbian Government.

Of profound importance is Serbia's unique role it can play as a mediator between the Russian Federation and the rest of the OSCE, as well as its experience in addressing frozen conflicts. Serbia has the opportunity of playing an important part in addressing the crisis both the European Union and OSCE find itself in with respect to Russia's continued actions that violate the Helsinki Final Act.

Specifically, I believe Serbia must effectively demonstrate to Russia that the inviolability of Europe's borders is not something to be bargained or negotiated and that its involvement in Ukraine does not have any real European similarity or symmetrical example. It's a violation unlike any since the end of World War II. I've been encouraged with the commitment to addressing the crisis thus far and believe that a great work can be accomplished with the help of Serbia's leadership.

So I look forward to the addressing of these issues at this hearing and as our governments continue to work together. I yield back, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. SMITH. Thank you very much, Commissioner Pitts. It is really a high honor to welcome Chairman-in-Office Dačić. Just very briefly, without objection, your full biography will be made a part of the record. You are a man with a great deal of experience and expertise. Married with two children. You've served as—and I would remind my colleagues—a member of the Socialist Party of Serbia since its foundation in 1991. In 2006, you served as president of the party, which was reformed under your leadership into a modern party of the center-left. You've been a member of several parliaments at the republican and federal levels, first elected in 1982 to the Citizen's Chamber of the Federal Assembly of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia. You've worked in many capacities, including as a representative to the Parliamentary Assembly for the Council of Europe. You also have served as prime minister and minister of interior. And apart from politics, you were also a great sportsman and served as the president of the Sports Association of Serbia, vice president of the Yugoslav Olympic Committee and the president of the Belgrade Basketball Club. So you're a very competitive guy. We welcome you to the Commission and look forward to your statement.

**IVICA DAČIĆ, CHAIRPERSON-IN-OFFICE OF THE OSCE, FIRST DEPUTY PRIME MINISTER AND MINISTER OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS, REPUBLIC OF SERBIA**

Mr. DAČIĆ. Thank you. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Mr. Smith, Mr. Cardin, Mr. Hastings, Mr. Pitts, ladies and gentlemen, thank you for the invitation to address your Commission.

I am honored to have the opportunity to discuss European security and the priorities of the Serbian chairmanship for the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe with members of the United States Congress. I would like to acknowledge the important role that the Helsinki Commission plays within the OSCE. We are

also grateful for the support and cooperation of the U.S. Department of State across the spectrum of the organization's work.

The active engagement of the United States within the OSCE is critical to the organization's effectiveness. Indeed, America is one of our anchors. It is a strong promoter of the OSCE values and commitments. It is also the largest contributor to the overall OSCE budget and a leading supporter of the Special Monitoring Mission to Ukraine, both in terms of financial support and personnel. Your country's steadfast support for the OSCE is deeply appreciated.

This year, as you know, is the 40th anniversary of the signing of the Helsinki Final Act. When Serbia agreed to serve as OSCE chairmanship in 2015, we expected we would be celebrating these fundamental principles of security. Instead, we have seen them blatantly violated. The dramatic developments in Europe over the past year are sharp reminders that both our security and the fundamental values of democracy and human rights be constantly defended.

Serbia's Chairmanship of the OSCE coincides with the worst crisis of European security since the end of the Cold War. The crisis in and around Ukraine dominates security considerations in Europe, but its impact is far greater. Mistrust and divisions, confrontational policies and zero-sum logic are undermining the cooperative approach to security that is at the heart of the OSCE comprehensive body of commitments and principles.

The current crisis has highlighted the enduring strengths and advantage of the OSCE as the organization best suited to bridging growing divides and facilitating cooperative solutions. Its response to the crisis has once again demonstrated the organization's relevance to European security.

The OSCE has been continuously engaged in trying to find a diplomatic solution to the crisis in and around Ukraine. Indeed, the OSCE is the only regional organization that brings all the key stakeholders to the table. We are keeping critical lines of communications open and finding opportunities for joint action.

The Serbian Chairmanship is doing its utmost to continue these efforts in an impartial and reliable manner. We recognize that both the OSCE and European security are at a critical juncture. Our highest priority is to protect the inclusive and cooperative nature of the OSCE's work and to prevent the crisis from escalating into a larger confrontation. Today the whole world is watching Ukraine. The OSCE is also in the global spotlight because of its key role in monitoring the ceasefire and the withdrawal of troops and heavy weapons.

The ceasefire is fragile, but it seems to be largely holding. I have repeatedly called on all parties to uphold the terms of the September 2014 Minsk Protocol and Memorandum and to fulfill their responsibilities under the package of measures for implementing the Minsk documents that was recently agreed within the framework of the Trilateral Contact Group.

The OSCE, and in particular our Special Monitoring Mission to Ukraine, is doing its part to facilitate the ceasefire process and all other efforts to restore stability and pave the way for reconstruction and reconciliation. The Special Monitoring Mission has proved to be a unique and invaluable asset in terms of the international

response to the crisis. However, it is an unarmed civilian mission carrying out what amounts to peacekeeping operation.

The Serbian Chairmanship will make every effort to help restore peace in Ukraine and to rebuild trust and confidence across the OSCE region. Our own recent past demonstrates that despite many difficulties, we can set a positive agenda for the future, focused on cooperation and reconciliation. Serbia brings to table good relations with all the key stakeholders. We are making every effort to serve as an honest broker and use our leadership role to utilize the OSCE toolbox impartially and transparently.

However, we have a shared responsibility, but especially the key stakeholders, to engage in dialogue and to create conditions for co-operation and compromise so that we can find a constructive way forward together. But please do not misunderstand me. I do not mean we should compromise our norms and principles. By the contrary, we must reaffirm and strengthen them and make them harder to violate.

Ladies and gentlemen, terrorism is without a doubt a top concern around the globe today. In recent weeks in the OSCE region, we have seen horrific attacks in Paris and Copenhagen. I offer my sincere condolences to the families of the victims. As the threat from terrorism and the related phenomenon on foreign terrorist fighters continues to grow, we must be united and determined in our condemnation of all forms of terrorism. We must also unify our societies to resist attempts to create divisions on the basis of religion, ethnicity, race or culture.

The Serbian Chairmanship will give special focus to countering violent extremism and radicalization that lead to terrorism, including radicalization of youth and the foreign fighter phenomenon. In July, we will host an expert-level OSCE-wide counterterrorism conference in Vienna that will focus on foreign terrorist fighters.

Ladies and gentlemen, allow me now to turn to priorities—to the priorities of the Serbian OSCE chairmanship. Supporting the peace process in Ukraine is, of course, our main priority. But there are other important challenges in the OSCE region where the OSCE has a role to play that must not be overshadowed by the current crisis. Chief among them is the resolution of protracted conflicts in the OSCE region through agreed formats.

In this regard, I would like to recognize the efforts of Ambassador James Warlick, the U.S. Co-Chair of the OSCE Minsk Group, and Deputy Assistant Secretary Eric Rubin, the U.S. representative in the Geneva Discussions. The agreed formats should meet regularly and without obstruction. And high-level contacts between the parties should continue. But I believe that we must also try to move beyond the status quo and take some small but concrete steps to increase trust and confidence between the parties.

Ladies and gentlemen, I am convinced that the OSCE has benefited from the continuity provided by the consecutive chairmanships of Switzerland and Serbia. The Serbian Chairmanship will continue to work on the basis of our Joint Work Plan in all three dimensions, giving special focus to certain topics of interest.

In addition to counterterrorism issues, our first dimension activities will focus on improving cooperation in confronting transnational organized crime, including its links to trafficking in

human beings and irregular migration; security sector governance and reform; and addressing emerging cybersecurity threats. We appreciate the continued commitment and leadership of the U.S. Chair of the Informal Working Group, as it focuses on developing a new set of cybersecurity confidence-building measures. The Serbian Chairmanship also supports continued dialogue on conventional arms control, with the hope that it can lead to progress in updating and modernizing our existing instruments, including confidence- and security-building measures, like the Vienna document.

In the second dimension, we will focus on issues that coincide with our national priorities, including combating corruption, water governance and disaster risk reduction and preparedness. This year's Economic and Environmental Forum will be devoted to water governance of the OSCE area, increasing security and stability through cooperation. The Economic and Environmental Dimension Implementation Meeting, which will take place in Vienna in October, will focus on the fight against corruption. We look forward to strong U.S. participation at both of these events.

Ladies and gentlemen, the Helsinki Final Act was revolutionary for its time in large part because it took the human dimension of security into account. Today it remains our duty and responsibility to highlight and protect the universal values of human rights, tolerance and nondiscrimination. OSCE participating States must continuously strive to strengthen the implementation of the human dimension commitments.

This year, we will place special emphasis on strengthening the rule of law, freedom of expression and freedom of the media, including the safety of journalists and freedom of assembly and association. The recent tragic events in Paris and Copenhagen underscore the importance of protecting freedom of expression. So our plan to organize an event devoted to the safety of journalists is especially relevant. We will also focus on the protection of the rights of persons belonging to national minorities and promotion of tolerance and nondiscrimination.

The OSCE agenda is becoming increasingly cross-dimensional. We will integrate the perspectives and concerns of women and youth in our activities, particularly at the grassroots level. Because civil society can and should play a crucial role in protecting human rights and creating policies in our participating States, we will also strengthen efforts to engage civil society in the organization's work.

Ladies and gentlemen, Serbia will strive to intensify efforts to advance regional cooperation and reconciliation in the Western Balkans. Our region has benefited significantly from the presence of OSCE field operations and their efforts to assist host countries to implement the OSCE commitments in all three dimensions of security. My country has directly benefited from the OSCE's work, and we know from our own experience the important contribution that OSCE field operations can make.

Ladies and gentlemen, the current crisis of European security highlights the importance of the OSCE as a security organization. Its response to the situation in Ukraine has shown that the OSCE can deliver. It reminds us that our comprehensive concept of security also includes the politico-military dimension. And we should

support this aspect of the organization's work as firmly as we support its work in the human dimension. I should also point out that the OSCE provides very good value for very little money. Imagine how much more it could do with additional resources. Its work would have an even deeper impact.

Ladies and gentlemen, as we prepare to commemorate the 40th anniversary of the Helsinki Final Act this year, we need to find ways to rebuild trust and confidence and to re-engage in joint efforts to strengthen security across the whole OSCE region. We must keep a close eye on the broader strategic perspective of European security. And we must continue to uphold our common values and principles, as enshrined in the Helsinki Final Act and other landmark OSCE documents.

I strongly believe that the OSCE has a crucial role in the overall European security architecture as an inclusive platform for dialogue, building trust and bridging the growing East-West divide. This is captured in the motto of the Serbian chairmanship: Rebuilding trust and confidence in order to create a positive agenda for the future. And we will spare no effort in pursuing this goal. In this regard, I welcome the creation of the Panel of Eminent Persons on European Security as a common project which was launched in December at the annual OSCE Ministerial Council.

Mr. Chairman, President Obama has reaffirmed the centrality of European security to American interests and national security. The OSCE provides a unique format through which the United States can contribute to European security. The OSCE is broadly inclusive, providing an increasingly important bridge between the Euro-Atlantic and the Euro-Asian regions.

I would like to thank the United States for its firm commitment to the OSCE. I hope that your country will continue to make the most of the OSCE's inclusive platform for dialogue and joint action. Thank you for your attention and support. I look forward to your questions and comments.

Mr. SMITH. Chairman Dačić, thank you for your very, very expansive vision, for presenting it to the Helsinki Commission and, by extension, to the U.S. Congress. We will make this record available to our colleagues and put your full statement into the Congressional Record.

Mr. Hastings has a hearing that he has to attend that began at 3:00, but I'd like to yield to him if you'd like to say a word or two.

Mr. HASTINGS. Just to thank you. And I know how difficult being OSCE Chair-in-Office is. You have our full support, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. DAČIĆ. Thank you very much.

Mr. HASTINGS. I look forward to seeing you in Vienna.

Mr. DAČIĆ. Thank you very much.

Mr. SMITH. I would like to note that Ambassador Michael Kirby, U.S. ambassador to Serbia, is here with us today. And I want to thank him for—Ambassador Kirby, thank you for being here. And there are many other diplomats and friends of the OSCE—

Mr. DAČIĆ. Our ambassador in United States?

Mr. SMITH. Yes. Mr. Ambassador, thank you.

Mr. DAČIĆ. Your ambassador.

Mr. SMITH. Welcome. Just a few questions, Mr. Chairman, and then I'll yield to my good friend, Mr. Cohen, and then to Commissioner Pitts.

The Special Monitoring Mission obviously carries with it a number of dangers for those who have been deployed there. We know what happened to those—maybe because we have a vote, we'll all ask our questions and then as best you can concisely answer, because we are now being called to the floor for another set of votes, and I apologize for that. But the monitoring mission, we know what happened in Crimea when the OSCE folks were held and restrained. If you could perhaps elaborate on that mission: Does it need to be augmented? Is it about the right size?

I asked you at the meeting in Vienna about the issue of ensuring that there are eyes and ears when it comes to human trafficking. As we all know, traffickers prey on disenfranchised persons. And we know there are at least a million and a half IDPs who very quickly could become exploited and trafficked.

I'd like to yield to Mr. Cohen. Maybe he can ask a few of his questions, then Mr. Pitts.

**HON. STEVE COHEN, COMMISSIONER, COMMISSION ON  
SECURITY AND COOPERATION IN EUROPE**

Thank you, Mr. Chair. I had the opportunity to visit your nation. Ambassador Kirby hosted a dinner at his home and the Prime Minister was with us. We had an excellent discussion. I learned of his interest in basketball; I know you have that too.

Mr. Putin had just kind of disregarded Serbia with the pipeline situation, and I think he showed disrespect to your nation. Russia has violated every precept and guidance of the OSCE during these past few years; these are fundamental principles. How does Russia continue to operate in the OSCE? And can it in the future with its actions in Ukraine? Being that time is of the essence, I will make that my question. Basically: Russia, Putin, human rights, anti-Semitism, violation of principles and inclusion.

Mr. SMITH. Commissioner Pitts?

Mr. PITTS. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I too am concerned about that issue of Ukraine and the Crimea, the crisis that continues to be the focus of OSCE's work. How will your chairmanship work to resolve the crisis, number one? And two, Crimea's a part of Ukraine; how will the Serbian Chairmanship engage to address the ongoing violation of OSCE commitments by the Russian Federation in its invasion and occupation of Crimea? That's my concern.

Mr. SMITH. And finally, Mr. Chairman, because, again, we are running out of time and that's because of the floor votes, if I could ask you—you have suggested that you're going to have conferences on violence and persecution against Christians and Muslims. I think that is an extremely important initiative for Serbia to be initiating.

I remember raising in this room that time and time again in Kosovo, so many churches were not only desecrated but decimated. There needed to be a response that was far more robust than there was. No matter what the faith is—Judaism, Christianity or Islam—people should be able to live out their faith freely and in

an unfettered manner. I applaud you for your vision to have such conferences. Perhaps you might want to speak to that as well.

Mr. ĐAČIĆ. [Through interpreter.] I am going to speak to you in Serbian and we will have interpretation into English, just to avoid making any mistakes because each and every word counts.

I would like to thank the United States of America for the support it has been providing to the OSCE. And our chairmanship is based on the principles that we are intending to consult around all the topics with all the major key player and stakeholders within the OSCE.

The OSCE Troika comprises at the time being Switzerland, Serbia and Germany, which is going to hold the next chairmanship. Our chairmanship priorities have been discussed in London, in Paris, in Berlin, in Brussels, in Moscow, but also in Kyiv—and today and tomorrow, here in Washington as well. Today we have a hearing here in the Congress and tomorrow I will have a meeting with the U.S. Secretary of State, Mr. Kerry.

Two days ago in New York, I had a meeting with my counterparts—Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation and also Minister of Foreign Affairs of Ukraine, particularly around the topics that you have just mentioned—the new mission—actually, the extension of the mandate of the existing Special Monitoring Mission. We were able to reach an agreement for this mission to have extended its mandate, which was at the time 6 months—to extend it to the full 12 months, and of course, to uphold everything that has been agreed in Minsk.

The mission of the OSCE will play a verification role. At the political level, it will also play a mediation or brokering role. My special representative within the Trilateral Contact Group, Swiss Ambassador Heidi Tagliavini, jointly with the Special Monitoring Mission, headed by the Turkish Ambassador Mr. Apakan will observe and monitor the ceasefire, the withdrawal of heavy weapons, but also the restoration and maintaining of all of these issues which have the social and economic component, such as the supply of gas, electricity, incomes, salaries, pensions, and so on, but also to discuss about the local elections—to coordinate the discussions with the Ukrainian authorities in regard to local elections and constitutional reforms and control of borders as well.

All in all, you know that all the decisions which are reached within the OSCE are reached by consensus. We are investing extreme and maximal efforts. Regardless of the diverging opinions and standpoints, I have to say that we are effective in the operation on the ground. We are interested in principles. This means that Serbia, in its chairmanship capacity, has a fair and objective role as a mediator and has a brokering role in these negotiations, which is, of course, based on the principles set out in the Helsinki Final Act.

Serbia has also been given support from the 15 member states of the Security Council during its chairmanship. Myself, as the Chairperson-in-Office, but also the Secretary General of the OSCE, stand ready to come here and to brief you on any topic of your interest, including the topics which you have raised—the fight against trafficking human beings, anti-Semitism, anti-Christianity notions and all other issues. In line with this, we would like to con-

tinue in the same fashion. I also agree with you that the role of the parliamentarians is of crucial importance for our work. This also implies the work of the Parliamentary Assembly of the OSCE.

Of course, in regard to our bilateral relations, since I'm here with you in Congress, Serbia wishes the best possible relations with the United States. Serbia wishes to restart these relations. A hundred years ago at the end of the First World War on the decree of President Wilson, a Serbian flag was mounted on the White House as a sign—as a sign of the support and the heroic fight of the Serbian nation and people in the First World War. We had extremely difficult periods in our bilateral relations, but I think that it is in our common interests for Serbia to be the factor of stability and peace within the region.

Serbia was able to transform itself from a problematic country. Now it is a country which is chairing the OSCE. I would like to urge you to communicate much more frequently with Serbia, and to pay as many visits as you can to Serbia. And my friend, your ambassador to Serbia, Mr. Kirby, I constantly repeat to him, that there are very few people in Serbia who remember the last visit of your President to Serbia. They say that this was President Ford. I don't recall this data, so I think that this opportunity could be utilized for rebuilding of our good relations.

Mr. SMITH. Mr. Chairman, thank you so very much, again. We have, all of us, many more questions, but the bell has rung and matter of fact we're out of time to vote. But I do look forward to, myself, returning to Belgrade. I've been there before for a visit. I look forward to working with you and your staff during your chairmanship-in-office. And again, thank you for the privilege of receiving your testimony. The hearing is adjourned.

Mr. ĐAČIĆ. Thank you.

[Whereupon, at 3:27 p.m., the hearing was adjourned.]



## **A P P E N D I X**

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## PREPARED STATEMENTS

## PREPARED STATEMENT OF HON. CHRISTOPHER H. SMITH, CHAIRMAN, COMMISSION ON SECURITY AND COOPERATION IN EUROPE

Welcome to everyone joining us this afternoon—especially to His Excellency First Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs Ivica Dacic.

Your Chairmanship this year of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) in 2015 comes at a moment of tragedy, of tremendous human suffering, in the region. One OSCE member—the Russian government—is tearing the heart out of a neighboring member, Ukraine.

Today there are more than 5,400 dead and almost 1.5 million internally displaced persons in Ukraine—and no end in sight. Russian weapons, special forces, and all sorts of shady Russian-led mercenaries, proxies, and criminal gangs are creating vast, ill-defined and constantly shifting zones of outright war, lower-level conflict, and chaos. These “zones” are home to millions of men, women, and children who live there—or try to. Only a few days ago, Bishop Shevchuk, Patriarch of the Ukrainian Greek Catholic Church, called it “the greatest humanitarian catastrophe in Eastern Europe since the end of World War II.”

Your Excellency, we will look forward to hearing from you what the OSCE, under your Chairmanship, proposes to do to respond to the humanitarian needs in Ukraine, and to the Russian aggression. We’ll be especially interested to hear about the Special Monitoring Mission and the Minsk Agreements. Although the latest Minsk agreements were signed only two weeks ago, there are already serious violations—for example, last week the people of the rail town of Debaltseve were subject to shelling and their city was captured in violation of the Minsk agreements. Russia and its proxies must adhere to Minsk and immediately stop all cease-fire violations, allow OSCE monitors access to where they need to be on the ground, and withdraw heavy weapons from the front lines.

Understanding that the OSCE is a consensus organization—meaning that the Russian government has an effective veto over many significant actions—we believe the OSCE is still able and responsible to speak the truth about the conflict, to find ways to limit it, and to help the people of Ukraine. Our government will support you in this, and certainly my Co-Chairman, Sen. Roger Wicker, and I, and our fellow Commissioners will do everything in our means to support you as well.

Your Excellency, I also look forward to hearing about the fight against human trafficking and anti-Semitism—two issues we discussed briefly last week, at the Winter Meeting of the Parliamentary Assembly.

In my capacity as the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly’s Special Representative on Human Trafficking Issues, I hope to be able to work with you to update internal OSCE regulations so “that no activities of the OSCE executive structures, including contracts for goods and services, contribute to any form of THB,” as was agreed upon in the Kiev Ministerial Decision in 2013. I look forward to the support of the Serbian Chairmanship to ensure institutional commitment from the OSCE that matches the magnitude of the challenge we face with modern slavery.

To speak for a moment about domestic issues in Serbia, fifteen years ago I authored the Trafficking Victims Protection Act, which, among its many provisions, mandated the State Department’s Trafficking in Persons Report. I hope you will use that analysis to boost efforts to protect victims and end the scourge of human trafficking throughout the OSCE region.

Fighting anti-Semitism has been a priority for the Helsinki Commission since 2002, when I first proposed and formed a movement to place this issue on the OSCE agenda—which led to the Berlin Declaration in 2004 and the Berlin +10 Conference last year. So we look forward to discussing as well vigorous implementation of the fight against anti-Semitism.

Thank you, Your Excellency, for briefing the Commission this afternoon.

PREPARED STATEMENT OF HON. ROGER F. WICKER, CO-CHAIRMAN, COMMISSION ON  
SECURITY AND COOPERATION IN EUROPE

Ladies and gentlemen, I join my colleagues in welcoming His Excellency First Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs Ivica Đačić to this hearing before the Helsinki Commission. Your presence is an important tradition for our Commission as we work to formulate U.S. policy regarding the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE).

In 2011, Switzerland and Serbia agreed to prioritize crisis management capacities during their successive OSCE Chairmanships. Little did we know the scope of challenges to European and Eurasian security we would face today. The Kremlin continues to use their militant proxies in Ukraine to exact an even greater human toll. The OSCE's field operations, especially the Special Monitoring Mission, serves as the only existing and credible mechanism through which any ceasefire terms can be implemented. We should be thankful that in the years preceding the conflict in Ukraine, the OSCE was responsible for the destruction of about 16,000 metric tons of *mélange*, a toxic rocket fuel component that could have fallen in to the wrong hands.<sup>1</sup> In this sense, the OSCE has been a great insurance policy for security cooperation that we must continue to invest in.

Last year, I visited Georgia and Moldova as part of a Helsinki Commission delegation and learned firsthand about Moscow's intentions and designs beyond Ukraine. The OSCE is also a large part of our response to instability in these countries, and we need to make that response as effective as possible.

I am glad, your Excellency, that in your recent speech before the OSCE Permanent Council you acknowledged the gravity of our security challenges by prioritizing "dialogue and compromise, peaceful resolution of disputes, confidence-building, solidarity, responsibility and cooperation."<sup>2</sup> I applaud your interest in convening further expert meetings on counter-terrorism and addressing foreign terrorist fighters, a phenomenon with impacts in and around the OSCE area. These are important priorities in addition to the need for reinforcing the OSCE's arms control instruments and confidence and security building mechanisms. We can't let some participating States misinterpret these treaties and instruments. Russia's continued refusal to meet its obligations under the Vienna Document, the Open Skies Treaty and the Conventional Armed Forces in Europe (CFE) Treaty are a part of a bigger picture that erodes our ability to secure Ukraine's sovereignty.

While I value the OSCE as a forum for European security, I also support the organization's efforts to promote human rights and democratic institutions throughout the region. Indeed, the comprehensive definition of security contained in the Helsinki Final Act includes respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms, and the last 40 years has shown us that greater democracy brings greater peace and stability across Europe. And as the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly asserted, at its 2014 annual session, that "improved democratic practices regarding free and fair elections, adherence to the rule of law and respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms in the Russian Federation would benefit the citizens of that State but also contribute significantly to stability and confidence among its neighbours, as well as enhance security and co-operation among all the participating States."

Your Excellency, Serbia has clearly demonstrated its potential to lead the OSCE through a constructive relationship with the OSCE Mission to Serbia and efforts toward European Union membership. Serbia is not only a country of regional significance in the Balkans but a country which can advocate adherence to Helsinki Principles and OSCE provisions with the credibility of having overcome so many challenges in the last 20 years.

As this Commission has emphasized to all Chairs-in-Office we meet with, the chairmanship should be a model for other participating States regarding the implementation of OSCE commitments. I hope this hearing will explore how we can support each other as our countries seek to implement our commitments in all dimensions. I wish your chairmanship every success and I look forward to your testimony.

<sup>1</sup> OSCE Melange Program Infographic: Ensuring people's security and environmental safety, June 26, 2014 (<http://www.osce.org/fsc/120274>)

<sup>2</sup> Address by His Excellency Ivica Đačić, Chairperson-in-Office of the OSCE, at the Special Meeting of the OSCE Permanent Council, January 15, 2015—Vienna, Austria

PREPARED STATEMENT OF IVICA DAČIĆ, CHAIRPERSON-IN-OFFICE OF THE OSCE,  
FIRST DEPUTY PRIME MINISTER AND MINISTER OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS, REPUBLIC OF  
SERBIA

Chairman Smith, Co-Chairman Wicker, Commissioners, Ladies and Gentlemen,  
Thank you for the invitation to address your Commission. I am honored to have the opportunity to discuss European security and the priorities of the Serbian Chairmanship of the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe with members of the United States Congress.

I would like to acknowledge the important role that the Helsinki Commission plays within the OSCE. We are also grateful for the support and co-operation of the U.S. Department of State across the spectrum of the Organization's work. The active engagement of the United States within the OSCE is critical to the Organization's effectiveness. Indeed, America is one of our anchors. It is a strong promoter of OSCE values and commitments. It is also the largest contributor to the overall OSCE budget, and a leading supporter of the Special Monitoring Mission to Ukraine both in terms of financial support and personnel. Your country's steadfast support for the OSCE is deeply appreciated.

This year, as you know, is the 40th anniversary of the signing of the Helsinki Final Act. When Serbia agreed to serve as OSCE Chairmanship in 2015, we expected we would be celebrating these fundamental principles of security. Instead, we have seen them blatantly violated. The dramatic developments in Europe over the past year are sharp reminders that both our security and the fundamental values of democracy and human rights must be constantly defended.

Serbia's Chairmanship of the OSCE coincides with the worst crisis of European security since the end of the Cold War. The crisis in and around Ukraine dominates security considerations in Europe, but its impact is far greater. Mistrust and divisions, confrontational policies and zero-sum logic are undermining the co-operative approach to security that is at the heart of the OSCE's comprehensive body of commitments and principles. Twenty-five years ago in Paris, our Heads of State or Government declared the end of confrontation and division in Europe. They expressed their commitment to democracy, human rights and fundamental freedoms; prosperity through economic freedom and social justice; and equal security for all countries. The Helsinki process and full implementation of all commitments are at the very foundation of the Paris Charter. The Serbian Chairmanship is fully aware that it is our duty to defend what the OSCE stands for, and we count on your support.

The current crisis has highlighted the enduring strengths and advantages of the OSCE as the organization best suited to bridging growing divides and facilitating co-operative solutions. Its response to the crisis has once again demonstrated the Organization's relevance to European security.

The OSCE has been continuously engaged in trying to find a diplomatic solution to the crisis in and around Ukraine. Indeed, the OSCE is the only regional organization that brings all the key stakeholders to the table. We are keeping critical lines of communication open, and finding opportunities for joint action.

The Serbian Chairmanship is doing its utmost to continue these efforts in an impartial and reliable manner. We recognize that both the OSCE and European security are at a critical juncture. Our highest priority is to protect the inclusive and co-operative nature of the OSCE's work, and to prevent the crisis from escalating into a larger confrontation. We are making every effort to rebuild confidence and trust among participating States and to restart our joint efforts toward the vision of a Euro-Atlantic and Eurasian security community. We are fully committed to working with the main stakeholders to restore peace and stability for Ukraine and its people.

Today, the whole world is watching Ukraine. The OSCE is also in the global spotlight because of its key role in monitoring the ceasefire and the withdrawal of troops and heavy weapons. The ceasefire is fragile, but it seems to be largely holding. I have repeatedly called on all parties to uphold the terms of the September 2014 Minsk Protocol and Memorandum, and to fulfil their responsibilities under the Package of Measures for implementing the Minsk documents that was recently agreed within the framework of the Trilateral Contact Group. I would like to thank Ambassador Heidi Tagliavini, my Special Representative in Ukraine and to the Trilateral Contact Group, for her tireless commitment to helping the parties find the path towards peace.

The OSCE, and in particular our Special Monitoring Mission to Ukraine, is doing its part to facilitate the ceasefire process and all other efforts to restore stability and pave the way for reconstruction and reconciliation. The Special Monitoring Mission has proved to be a unique and invaluable asset in terms of the international response to the crisis. However, it is an unarmed civilian mission carrying out what

amounts to a peacekeeping operation. OSCE monitors are working under considerable operational constraints and in an extremely volatile environment. I salute their courage and dedication. Their safety is our primary concern. Depending on how the situation develops on the ground, we may need to reconsider the Mission's mandate.

The Serbian Chairmanship will make every effort to help restore peace in Ukraine and to rebuild trust and confidence across the OSCE region. Our own recent past demonstrates that, despite many difficulties, we can set a positive agenda for the future, focused on cooperation and reconciliation. Serbia brings to the table good relations with all the key stakeholders, and we are making every effort to serve as an honest broker and use our leadership role to utilize the OSCE toolbox impartially and transparently. However, we have a shared responsibility—but especially the key stakeholders—to engage in dialogue and to create conditions for co-operation and compromise so that we can find a constructive way forward together. But please do not misunderstand me: I do not mean we should compromise our norms and principles. Quite the contrary—we must reaffirm and strengthen them, and make them harder to violate.

Ladies and Gentlemen, terrorism is without a doubt a top concern around the globe today. In recent weeks in the OSCE region, we have seen horrific attacks in Paris and Copenhagen. I offer my sincere condolences to the families of the victims. As the threat from terrorism and the related phenomenon of foreign terrorist fighters continues to grow, we must be united and determined in our condemnation of all forms of terrorism. We must also unify our societies to resist attempts to create divisions on the basis of religion, ethnicity, race or culture. It is clear that a criminal justice response is not sufficient. We need to work with communities and address the deeper roots of the problem, and foster tolerance, nondiscrimination and respect for diversity.

The Serbian Chairmanship will give special focus to countering violent extremism and radicalization that lead to terrorism, including radicalization of youth and the foreign fighter phenomenon. In all of these areas, we will take our human dimension commitments into account, and also engage closely with the OSCE Partners for Cooperation. In July, we will host an expert-level, OSCE-wide counter-terrorism conference in Vienna that will focus on foreign terrorist fighters. This event was announced last week at the Ministerial Meeting of the White House Summit on Countering Violent Extremism as one of its regional follow-on events. I encourage the United States to make a strong contribution to our conference.

Ladies and Gentlemen, allow me now to turn to the priorities of the Serbian OSCE Chairmanship.

Supporting the peace process in Ukraine is of course our main priority. But there are other important challenges in the OSCE region where the OSCE has a role to play which must not be overshadowed by the current crisis. Chief among them is the resolution of protracted conflicts in the OSCE region through agreed formats. In this regard, I would like to recognize the efforts of Ambassador Warlick, the U.S. Co-Chair of the OSCE Minsk Group, and Deputy Assistant Secretary Eric Rubin, the U.S. representative in the Geneva Discussions. The agreed formats should meet regularly and without obstruction, and high-level contacts between the parties should continue. But I believe that we must also try to move beyond the status quo and take some small but concrete steps to increase trust and confidence between the parties. This could enable them to start focusing on substantive problems that could advance the peace process. After all, in the end, resolving the conflicts is the responsibility of the parties. The OSCE and key international players can encourage conditions to foster the necessary political will to support peaceful settlements.

Ladies and Gentlemen, I am convinced that the OSCE has benefited from the continuity provided by the consecutive chairmanships of Switzerland and Serbia. The Serbian Chairmanship will continue to work on the basis of our Joint Work Plan in all three dimensions, giving special focus to certain topics of interest.

In addition to counter-terrorism issues, our *first dimension* activities will focus on improving co-operation in confronting transnational organized crime, including its links to trafficking in human beings and irregular migration; security sector governance and reform; and addressing emerging cyber-security threats. We appreciate the continued commitment and leadership of the U.S. Chair of the Informal Working Group as it focuses on developing a new set of cyber-security confidence-building measures. The Serbian Chairmanship also supports continued dialogue on conventional arms control with the hope that it can lead to progress in updating and modernizing our existing instruments, including confidence- and security-building measures like the Vienna Document. We shall co-operate closely on politico-military issues with this year's Chairmanships of the Forum for Security Co-operation—Mongolia, Montenegro and Norway—and in our preparations for the Annual Security Review Conference.

In the *second dimension*, we will focus on issues that coincide with our national priorities, including combatting corruption, water governance, and disaster risk reduction and preparedness. This year's Economic and Environmental Forum will be devoted to "Water Governance in the OSCE Area—Increasing Security and Stability through Cooperation." The Economic and Environmental Dimension Implementation Meeting, which will take place in Vienna in October, will focus on the fight against corruption. We look forward to strong U.S. participation in both of these events.

Ladies and Gentlemen, the Helsinki Final Act was revolutionary for its time in large part because it took the *human dimension* of security into account. Today it remains our duty and responsibility to highlight and protect the universal values of human rights, tolerance and nondiscrimination. OSCE participating States must continuously strive to strengthen the implementation of their human dimension commitments including by strengthening national institutions of human rights. The Serbian Chairmanship will do its utmost to support them. This year we will place special emphasis on strengthening the rule of law, freedom of expression and freedom of the media, including the safety of journalists, and freedom of assembly and association. The recent tragic events in Paris and Copenhagen underscore the importance of protecting freedom of expression, so our plan to organize an event devoted to the safety of journalists is especially relevant. We will also focus on the protection of the rights of persons belonging to national minorities and promotion of tolerance and non-discrimination.

Recognizing that the OSCE agenda is increasingly cross-dimensional and that many contemporary threats to security stem in part from marginalization, we will strengthen efforts to be inclusive. We will integrate the perspectives and concerns of women and youth in our activities, particularly at the grass-roots level. Because civil society can and should play a crucial role in protecting human rights and creating policies in our participating States, we will also strengthen efforts to engage civil society in the Organization's work.

Ladies and Gentlemen, Serbia will strive to intensify efforts to advance regional co-operation and reconciliation in the Western Balkans. Our region has benefitted significantly from the presence of OSCE Field Operations and their efforts to assist host countries to implement their OSCE commitments in all three dimensions of security. My country has directly benefited from the OSCE's work, and we know from our own experience the important contribution that OSCE Field Operations can make. OSCE Field Operations are reliable partners, and Serbia is proud to host the OSCE in our country. OSCE Field Operations make a significant and constructive contribution to enhancing security and consolidating reform processes that make our societies stronger and protect the rights of our citizens. Although every region in the OSCE area is different, I am convinced that sharing the lessons of the Western Balkans more broadly would be beneficial. The current crisis of security in the OSCE region underscores the need for dialogue and reconciliation. Serbia's own experience demonstrates that it is possible to create a positive agenda even in the face of significant obstacles by adopting a pragmatic and goal-oriented approach.

Ladies and Gentlemen, The current crisis of European security highlights the importance of the OSCE as a security organization. Its response to the situation in Ukraine has shown that the OSCE can deliver. It reminds us that our comprehensive concept of security also includes the politico-military dimension, and we should support this aspect of the Organization's work as firmly as we support its work in the human dimension. Especially when we are putting hundreds of civilian staff on the ground in a conflict situation, we should be able to offer them as much protection as possible. I hope that we can accelerate progress toward resolving the long-unresolved issue of the OSCE's lack of a legal personality. This would help us to address this kind of challenge.

I should also point out that the OSCE provides very good value for very little money. Imagine how much more it could do with additional resources. Its work would have an even deeper impact.

Ladies and Gentlemen, as we prepare to commemorate the fortieth anniversary of the Helsinki Final Act this year, we need to find ways to rebuild trust and confidence and to re-engage in joint efforts to strengthen security across the whole OSCE region. We must keep a close eye on the broader strategic perspective of European security. And we must continue to uphold our common values and principles as enshrined in the Helsinki Final Act and other landmark OSCE documents. Although these norms have been violated, they do not need to be reconsidered. Instead, they need to be reaffirmed and strengthened and made more difficult to undermine. We should look back to the roots of the Helsinki process and learn from the commitment of those Cold War-era leaders to work together. We should remember that we have joint responsibility for peace and security in Europe.

I strongly believe that the OSCE has a crucial role in the overall European security architecture—as an inclusive platform for dialogue, building trust, and bridging the growing East-West divide. This is captured in the motto of the Serbian Chairmanship—*“Rebuilding trust and confidence in order to create a positive agenda for the future”*—and we will spare no effort in pursuing this goal. In this regard, I welcome the creation of the Panel of Eminent Persons on European Security as a Common Project, which was launched in December at the annual OSCE Ministerial Council. I am confident that the Panel has the potential to generate innovative ideas that can help us recapture the “spirit of Helsinki.” I look forward to its recommendations on how to replace the current culture of confrontation with one of co-operation and joint action.

Chairman Smith,  
Co-Chairman Wicker,  
Commissioners,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,

President Obama has reaffirmed the centrality of European security to American interests and national security. The OSCE provides a unique format through which the United States can contribute to European security. The OSCE is broadly inclusive, providing an increasingly important bridge between the Euro-Atlantic and the Eurasian regions.

I would like to thank the United States for its firm commitment to the OSCE. I hope that your country will continue to make the most of the OSCE's inclusive platform for dialogue and joint action. Thank you for your attention and support.

I look forward to your questions and comments.

First Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Serbia Iвица Đaćić was born on 1 January 1966 in Prizren. After graduating from the Faculty of Political Science in Belgrade, he became actively involved in politics. He is married and has two children.

Mr. Đaćić has been a Member of the Socialist Party of Serbia (SPS) since its foundation in 1991. Since 2006, he has served as the President of the Party, which has been reformed under his leadership into a modern party of centre left, with a clear pro-European orientation. He was awarded the title of the Best European (Najevropljanin) in 2009 by the European Movement in Serbia for his contributions to Serbia's European path.

Mr. Đaćić was a Member of several Parliaments at republican and federal levels—he was first elected in 1992 to the Citizens' Chamber of the Federal Assembly of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, where he later became the SPS chief whip. He was elected in 2004 as a Member of the National Assembly of the Republic of Serbia, where he also headed the MP Group of the coalition rallied around the SPS. He was a Member of the parliamentary delegation of the National Assembly of the Republic of Serbia to the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe.

In addition to performing parliamentary duties, Mr. Đaćić held a number of governmental positions. He was an acting Minister of Information in the so-called transitional government of the Republic of Serbia from October 2000 to January 2001. From July 2008 to July 2012, he served as the First Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Interior; from July 2012 to April 2014, as Prime Minister and Minister of Interior.

From 27 April 2014 and onwards, Mr. Đaćić was the First Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs. Apart from politics, Mr. Đaćić's outside interests also include sports. He held the offices of President of Belgrade “Partizan” Basketball Club, Vice-President of the Yugoslav Olympic Committee, President of the Sport Association of Serbia.



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