

Interview with Goran Svilanovic

I Spoke with Vucic about Visit to Berlin

I spoke with Aleksandar Vucic about his visit to Berlin. We have joint expectations when it comes to obtaining a date for the start of negotiations with the EU. The Council is pretty much engaged in security issues, Goran Svilanovic said, the former foreign minister of FRY and current Secretary General of the Regional Cooperation Council, with head office in Sarajevo

Marko Petrovic

Defining a date for the start of EU accession negotiations was certainly one of the topics of the discussion with Vucic and Secretary of State at the Ministry of Defence, Aleksandar Nikolic. Earlier, we organised meetings of heads of military-security agencies in countries of the region. We will continue this practice. At the same time, we work on development of software that will enable countries in the region to mutually exchange sensitive security data, Svilanovic told "Blic."

Apart from Vucic and Foreign Minister Ivan Mrkic last week, did you meet any other government representatives?

I was pleasantly surprised by discussions with Dejan Trifunovic from the Ministry of Energy and Radivoje Mitrovic from the Ministry of Education. As you know, one of the pillars of the South East Europe 2020 Strategy covers energy and environmental issues, and it is important and good that Serbia sees its place in the process. At the Ministry of Energy, I was presented with a national energy strategy and projects for implementation of the strategy. At the Ministry of Education, we discussed the possibility for Serbia to be a host of the Initiative for education reform in the region and to establish an office of this Initiative in Belgrade.

What are the objectives you want to set by the South East Europe 2020 Strategy with regard to trade, investments and education?

Ministers of economy from the region gave green light to the Strategy development and set goals they want to achieve together. We are here to do everything we can to help them be successful in achieving these goals. Let me mention the most important ones: employment growth from 40% to 45%, increase in mutual trade by 230%, region's GDP rise from the current 38% to 46% of EU average. Our objective is also to increase the total inflow of direct foreign investments in the region by 120%, and to raise the number of people with university-level education at the labour market by 300,000. In order to make this happen, primarily production must be improved, and then trade as well.

What is your view of current relations in the region?

The recent meeting between Tomislav Nikolic and Atifete Jahjaga, which used to be unimaginable not so long ago, testifies of “political maturity of key politicians.” A lot of work is yet to be done in the region. I expect relations in the region to move forward, because it is the only possible path, and that is why I am sure that Serbian and Croatian presidents will meet as well. In addition to their symbolic importance and, of course, their role in increasing the level of trust and friendship between nations, meetings of state leaders in the region have an increasingly pronounced economic element. Therefore, politicians are fully aware that economies in the region are on their own, and that only mutually linked can they be competitive at third markets. As difficult as it may be sometimes, politicians have the duty to overcome their personal and political differences. Whoever tries to isolate others or oneself will end up without support, alone and unsuccessful.

Cyrillic script

You said that you viewed the region as a place of "dialogue, where everyone feels safe and protected by the rule of law". What is your comment on events related to the use of Cyrillic script in Croatia?

We must be aware of the legacy from the nineties and the fact that many lives were lost, that people and places underwent heavy suffering. We should understand those who experienced all that. But we should also look ahead, into the future. That is why I support the courage of Croatian Government, and I hope that all Croatian citizens, both Serbs and Croats in this area will support it, because they have to live together again, and not merely coexist next to one another, as Croatian Prime Minister explained several months ago.