

*Courtesy translation*

Belgrade, 12 October 2015

I hereby address you regarding the issue of the utmost importance for the Republic of Serbia, which gives cause for our serious concern. It is about the application of the so-called Kosovo for membership in the UNESCO. This application is unfounded from the point of view of the international law, as well as from moral and political aspect and therefore absolutely unacceptable for the Republic of Serbia.

In accordance with the UNSC Resolution 1244 (1999), which is still in force and legally binding and Constitutional Framework for Provisional Self-Government in Kosovo, Kosovo and Metohija is a territory which is a part of the Republic of Serbia under the United Nations administration. The UNSC Resolution 1244 (1999) reaffirms “sovereignty and territorial integrity of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia [now Republic of Serbia] and the other States of the region” and envisaged “political solution for Kosovo crisis” based on these principles. The issue of Kosovo and Metohija is still on the UNSC agenda, which is confirmed by regular, quarterly UNSC debates addressing this subject. Additionally, the UN Interim Administration, headed by the Special Representative of the UN Secretary General still acts in Kosovo and Metohija (the UNMIK).

Being that Kosovo cannot be considered a state as a subject of international law, it is obvious that elementary conditions for considering any of the issues in reference to Kosovo’s admission to full membership in the UNESCO have not been met. It was *de facto* admitted by Priština itself, trying to have the application delivered to the UNESCO with the UNMIK facilitation, which was refused by this UN Mission, considering its consistent respect for the UNSC Resolution 1244.

The UNESCO, as a specialized UN agency, is obliged to observe international law, in particular UNSC Resolutions under the Chapter VII of the UN Charter, which also includes Resolution 1244 (1999). In that context, consideration of Kosovo’s application for admission to UNESCO would be a gross violation of rules established under the auspices of the UN in order to preserve international peace and security and it would be contrary to the Article 25 of the UN Charter, which reads that “the Members of the United Nations agree to accept and carry out the decisions of the Security Council in accordance with the present Charter“. Thereby a dangerous precedent would be created.

The Government of the Republic of Serbia is fully committed to the dialogue between Belgrade and Priština facilitated by the EU. Many complex issues, which are of the utmost significance for stabilizing circumstances in the region and normalizing relations, were resolved in that process. Often, only thanks to good will of the Serbian Government, agreements that represented a foundation of more rational and normal relations between Serbs and Albanians in Kosovo and Metohija were reached, even though those political moves faced very negative reactions of the public in Serbia. Regardless of that, we remained and we still are firmly committed to dialogue with Kosovo Albanians and to finding solutions that will stabilize and normalize our mutual relations.

However, preservation of cultural monuments and property of the Serbian Orthodox Church in Kosovo and Metohija, have not been discussed so far within the dialogue. In that sense, unilateral attempts such as application of the so-called Kosovo for membership in the UNESCO bring us back in the past and harm the atmosphere which is encouraging for the dialogue which is in a very delicate phase. It would practically disable reaching mutually acceptable solution for this issue, which is one of the most sensitive issues for our side.

Priština does not have moral rights to ask for membership in the UNESCO, because by its acting in previous period it unambiguously demonstrated that it neither has ability, nor will to meet obligations resulting from membership in this Organization. The UNESCO aims are undoubtedly incompatible with intentional, systematic, vandal destruction of cultural and historic monuments of one's compatriots, dating from the 11<sup>th</sup> century. Since the end of 1999 conflicts and deployment of international forces, in peace, totally 141 Serbian orthodox Christian facilities were totally destroyed or severely damaged, and the UNESCO itself placed four pearls of the world heritage-monasteries Dečani, Pećka Patrijaršija, Gračanica and the Church of the Holy Virgin of Ljeviška, in the List of World Heritage in Danger. Slogans of the so-called Kosovo Liberation Army and threats against Serbs can still be seen on many demolished facilities, and lately also graffiti celebrating the Organization of the Islamic State, whose methods for demolishing cultural and religious facilities are unfortunately present in the territory of Kosovo and Metohija for quite some time. Words condemning such shameful crimes, which are not dignified of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, cannot be heard from Priština even today; there is no readiness to find and punish the perpetrators. Devastation of Serbian Christian and cultural heritage has never been thoroughly investigated, nor has anyone been brought before justice for these crimes.

Therefore, or particularly because of that, explanation of all those saying that by Kosovo's admission to the UNESCO Serbian cultural heritage will be protected in a better way sounds hypocritically, because no one from any Serbian church or monastery asked for such protection or such support –quite the contrary.

Activities of the Serbian Orthodox Church in the Province take place under extremely difficult conditions; beside organized, ethnically and religiously motivated violence and destruction of Serbian orthodox heritage, without precedent in recent European history, there are numerous examples of drastic jeopardizing of human and religious rights, freedom of movement and work of orthodox clergy and orthodox population in Kosovo and Metohija.

Under conditions of continuous attempts to destroy and steal identity and cultural heritage of Serbian people in Kosovo and Metohija, Kosovo's membership in the UNESCO would be a reward and giving a role of false protector of Serbian and Christian heritage to

those political structures in Priština that had done nothing in period from 1999 until today, to prevent devastation of Christian spiritual identity of one European nation and violent erasure of traces of centuries of its existence in the territory of Kosovo and Metohija.

With its positioning Serbia has shown its full commitment to resolving all open issues with Priština peacefully and through dialogue. Serbia is against any politicization of the work of the UNESCO as an organization whose mission should be to promote cooperation among the States through education, science and culture.

Finally, we are a small country, both territorially and regarding our population; we do not have political power to confront those who sponsor Kosovo's admission to the UNESCO, but it is our obligation to inform the humanity about illegal and immoral measures taken against our country, and thereby, if nothing else, defend the truth and pride of all righteous nations in the world.

Sincerely,

Aleksandar Vučić  
Prime Minister of the  
Republic of Serbia