



Statement by First Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs Ivica Dacic at the conference "Continental capacities in the framework of trade and investment cooperation between Africa and the Balkans: Serbia as the case in point"

"Ladies and gentlemen,

It is my great honour and pleasure to have the opportunity to speak at such an important event. I would like to thank the Serbian Chamber of Commerce and Industry and Chairman Marko Cadez as well as the Ranking Diplomat of the group of African Ambassadors in Belgrade, Ambassador of Algeria Abdelhamid Chebchoub and Ambassador of the Arab Republic of Egypt Amr Aljowaily for their selfless and immense efforts in organizing and hosting this very important Conference attended by business and company representatives from the Balkans, the Republic of Serbia and Africa.

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The Republic of Serbia fosters traditional, very good and friendly relations with the countries on the African continent, the fact we are very proud of. Serbia has always supported the struggle of friendly African peoples for their independence and freedom, which are the paramount ideals of the Republic of Serbia and of the Serbian people. Serbia is famous for this, as also evidenced by its history and the large number of victims it suffered in order to maintain and defend libertarian ideas that are woven into the foundations of our statehood. Sight should not be lost of the fact, either, that our country was among the first to support anti-colonial struggle of African peoples and countries and among the first to recognize independence of African countries which liberated themselves of the unjust colonial domination. Common struggle with the nations of Africa for freedom, justice and equality was most evident in the Non-Aligned Movement where the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia was one of the founders, the fact we are proud of, and we even today find an inspiration in this idea and encouragement to promotion cooperation with the countries of the African region.

Today's event bears witness to the fact that the Republic of Serbia continues to be present in the African region as much as possible. I am convinced that there is significant potential for the promotion of cooperation in the economic and trade fields as well as in the field of agriculture between the Balkans and African countries. The volume of trade in goods between the Republic of Serbia and African countries is less than USD 200 million per year. It is precisely this indicator that shows that there is ample room for making qualitative and quantitative improvements in our trade with African countries. We are also ready to improve cooperation in the energy sector, and in addition I see a further potential for contacts between small and medium-sized enterprises of our country with the African region. We are particularly interested in our construction companies and their operations becoming active in this region again. In referring to this sector I particularly have in mind the countries of Northern Africa, but also sub-Saharan African countries.

Ladies and gentlemen,
Dear friends,

Hopeful that this major event will deepen our friendly and partner relations, firmly grounded in history, I would like to welcome you once again and wish you successful work and participation at this conference.

Long live Serbia, long live Africa!

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