**Concerning the statement by Ivica Dačić on Relations with Russia**

The Centre for Euro-Atlantic Studies (CEAS) from Belgrade expresses its sharpest condemnation of yesterday's inaccurate statement by Ivica Dačić, the new Serbian Foreign Minister, claiming that: „We respect territorial integrity of every UN member state, including Ukraine, but on the other hand Serbia will never join any sanctions against Russia because not only that Russia is a friendly state to Serbia, its economic and political partner, but also a state that had never imposed any sanctions against Serbia.“

CEAS reminds the general public that the United Nations had introduced economic sanctions to the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (FRY) on May 30, 1992 on the basis of UNSC Resolution no. 757. The Resolution was adopted with thirteen votes for, without a single vote against, while China and Zimbabwe abstained. Russia is a permanent member of UNSC.

CEAS expresses concern about the tendency to contaminate the public sphere with inaccuracies which nevertheless have the power to significantly sway public opinion. This tendency is primarily reinforced by senior officials of Serbia and Russia. It is a matter of additional concern that media rarely warn the said actors not to disseminate inaccuracies.

CEAS reiterates that, for example, during the NATO bombing of FRY, the number of killed civilians at the territory of Serbia and Montenegro was several hundred victims, rather than several thousand, as was stated several times by Serbian President Tomislav Nikolić and Russian Ambassador to Serbia Alexander Cherupin, on occasion of commemorating the 15th anniversary of the bombing.

The situation is similar when it comes to data on volume of trade cooperation and grants provided to Serbia. Russia is not Serbia's biggest trade partner, as is often claimed by Serbian and Russian officials and „analysts,“ the biggest trade partners of Serbia are EU member states and the countries of the Western Balkan region. The countries of the political West are by far the biggest grant-givers to Serbia, while the amount of grants provided by Russia is negligent.

CEAS condemns the insulting assessment made by Ambassador Cherupin in today's interview with *Večernje Novosti*, when he said: „We assume that Serbia has its own interests and that it wants to pursue and defend them and rather than to „run after“ somebody else's decisions at all costs, trying to outshout the others.“

CEAS reminds the general public that citizens of Serbia in all democratic, free and fair elections since 2000 have elected governments, the platforms of which have included EU integration of Serbia. Thus Serbia does not „run after“ somebody else's decisions, but has made the majority decision to align its policies with the EU as it ensues from the rules of integration. Moreover, there is an impression that Russia exerts pressures on Serbia to increasingly „run after“ its destructive decisions and that Serbian officials do not have the strength to resist them, so they resort to deceiving the public opinion.

CEAS uses this opportunity to express its fiercest condemnation of the rhetoric of Russian officials, analysts and dignitaries of Serbian and Russian Orthodox Church against democratically elected leadership of Montenegro and its legitimate decisions.

Belgrade, April 30, 2014