

**ADDRESS  
BY  
HIS EXCELLENCY MR. BORIS TADIC,  
PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF SERBIA,  
ON THE OCCASION OF THE STATEHOOD DAY AND ARMY DAY**

**Dear citizens,**

**On this Day, Sretenje, Serbia is marking two important events: 205 years of the First Serbian Uprising and 174 years of the adoption of the Sretenje Constitution. That is why February 15<sup>th</sup> is Serbian Statehood Day and Army Day but it is also its Constitution Day.**

Two prominent personalities that specially epitomize these two days are the leader of the First Serbian Uprising Karadjordje Petrovic and the author of the Sretenje Constitution Dimitrije Davidovic.

Tenacity of the leader of the First Serbian Uprising Djordje Petrovic, the reputation he enjoyed among the people and his ability to appease the Dukes who often could not differentiate between the general and particular interest, between the national and private interests, made Karadjordje indisputable leader of the First Serbian Uprising and the founder of the modern Serbian state.

Serbia's constitutionality shared the destiny of the Serbian state which went through a difficult time on its road towards its full realization.

The First Serbian Constitution, the so-called Sretenje Constitution, drafted by Dimitrije Davidovic handed down a great legacy to the Serbian people. It entrusted it with the task of having always to be in a forefront of the efforts to attain freedoms and human rights.

The constitution was drawn up to secure Europeanization of Serbia, protection of citizens before the state and transformation of Serbia into the legal state with protected human and property rights for all.

Chapter 11 of the Sretenje Constitution states that we are all, without exception, equal before the law.

It is always wise to recall what was written down back in 1835.

Ladies and gentlemen,

Marking of the Statehood and Army Day unites identities of the Army and the state thus bringing out again their deep inter-connection in Serbia's statehood tradition. Serbia, that poses no threat to anyone but is everyone's friend and a partner, is an anchor of the regional stability and security and a democratic European country.

Serbia defends its interests only in a peaceful manner. That is the policy that we shall be guided by also in the future.

The Army is the guarantor of this peaceful state policy and an institution that we have full trust in.

Our security system is stable, despite the fact that the foreign-policy environment is full of new security challenges and trials.

Kosovo and Metohija is the most important and most sensitive issue of our own but also of regional and European security and policy.

We remain firmly committed to defending our legitimate rights in our territory through legal and diplomatic means and not by force. Serbia will never recognize independence of Kosovo and while respecting international law it will defend its own legitimate interests, its integrity in Kosovo, in the legal arena and before the International Court of Justice. The 17<sup>th</sup> of February is for Serbia the date when an illegal act was adopted when Pristina unilaterally declared Kosovo as a so-called state.

A year later everyone realized that Kosovo is not a state. We say to our citizens in Kosovo that their state is looking after them and their interests.

Ladies and gentlemen,

The wave of the global economic crisis has not yet reached its full climax and no one can predict how long it will last and what consequences it will have.

The Government program of measures to mitigate the negative effects of the crisis on the Serbian economy is only in the function of defence of our economy, stabilization of the dinar and maintenance of the standards of citizens.

The Government of Serbia will make a monthly analysis of the situation and will adapt measures to the effects of the crisis. Defence of productive jobs will be our priority.

In order to solve problems more quickly than in the past we have to get down to business more vigorously. The same applies to all state institutions, including both the President of the Republic and the government, the provincial, town and municipal authorities, courts and prosecutor's offices.

Nowadays, Serbia needs unity of all national potentials. It needs solidarity, respect for others and focusing on what we have in common and what is undeniable and that is the prosperity of Serbia instead of wasting time and energy on arguments and conflicts.

Many different nationalities live in our country with their religion, their identity and culture fully respected. There is no room for national chauvinism, fascism, anti-semitism and hate speech in Serbia.

Anyone resorting to these anti-civilization acts will encounter strong resistance and condemnation, primarily by the public. One who insults and humiliates a member of the national minority, does the same to whole Serbian nation, especially if this happens in our highest legislative institution - Serbian Parliament. Serbia is a country that will never again experience divisions, whether religious or ethnic. We are all equal citizens of one Serbia.

I call on all representatives of state and citizens to respect the European standards set out by the author of the Sretenje Constitution in 1835. I call on them to respect the Constitution and laws of this country and that the laws be equally applied both to all citizens and to those in power.

Every Minister, every state official, every parliament member must always bear in mind the fact that he must be in the service of the people and citizens and must be humble and behave properly.

He also must perform his duties in a serious and honest manner.

That is the most important mandate given to us by our citizens in the elections and we must never forget it.

Citizens of Serbia,

Membership in the European Union as the strategic goal of our country was clearly defined and reaffirmed in all past elections, as decided by the citizens. In spite of the global financial crisis and its impact on the international relations we will achieve this historic goal of ours.

This is for our own sake, for the sake of better life of our citizens, for the sake of our children. We must complete our cooperation with the Hague Tribunal and that is the only political condition for our membership in the European Union.

We must not give up and despite the obstacles there is no room for doubt, skepticism and lack of enthusiasm. Serbia needs a new impetus and with a new energy of ours we will succeed because this people had the strength to overcome all obstacles at the time when there was a clear awareness of the goal, when there was unity, seriousness, decency and hard work.

In addition to the EU membership, Serbia also wishes to have the best possible relations with Russia and the United States of America. Despite disagreements on some issues Serbia also wishes to strengthen the relations with Montenegro, Croatia, Bosnia and Herzegovina and Macedonia. Serbia is making every effort to make the region stable and to make good relations the basis of regional prosperity. Without Serbia and its potential no regional initiative stands a chance of succeeding and with Serbia every economic, political and peace process in the Western Balkans has a future.

Regional stability is our state interest but it is also the interest of all people who live in our Balkan region.

Here, in Novi Sad, in our province of Vojvodina, I wish to emphasize that by its Statute that will be aligned with the Constitution of Serbia, Vojvodina will get what is guaranteed to it by the Constitution and that the unity of the country will in no way be jeopardized. Decentralization is the tradition in Serbia and Vojvodina has European but primarily Serbian character. It is an integral part of Serbia and it will remain so.

I wish to remove any doubt, suspicion and fear and to ask for politicized debate on the Statute of the province to be translated into an argued democratic discussion. On this Statehood Day we also symbolically mark Serbia's unity, its territorial integrity and indivisibility. We observe the freedom-loving tradition of the Serbian people but also the respect for all Serbian citizens: Serbs, Hungarians, Bosniaks, Roma, Croats, Slovaks, Romanians, Ruthenians, Bunjevci, Gorani, Albanians, Vlachs, Montenegrins, and Macedonians alike. We celebrate our renewed statehood but also a persistent work to promote human rights and freedoms, respect religion, tradition and culture and identity.

Orientated towards Serbia's European future, we preserve our sovereignty, integrity and dignity so that our state could be the way we want it to: strong, stable and respected by the world.

The citizens of Serbia, I congratulate you the Statehood Day of the Republic of Serbia! Gentlemen soldiers, I congratulate you Serbian Army Day.