BAR ASSOCIATION OF SERBIA

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No : 39/2015
15 January 2015

Attn: UNION INTERNATIONAL DES AVOCATS (UIA) – MR ANDRÁS SZECSKAY

COUNCIL OF BARS AND LAW SOCIETIES OF EUROPE (CCBE) – MR PÉTER S. SZABÓ

INTERNATIONAL BAR ASSOCIATION (IBA) – MR PÉTER KÖVES

Re: Report on the course of the protest of attorneys-at-law of Serbia in the period between 10 December 2014 and 14 January 2015

The protest with work stoppage of attorneys-at-law in the Republic of Serbia started on 17 September 2014 pursuant to the decision of the Assembly of the Bar Association of Serbia dated 13 September 2014. The reasons and requests behind the decision to organise the protest are summarised as follows:

1. The protection of constitutionality and legality and the request that the relevant provisions of the following laws be amended under the urgent procedure:

- Law on Notary Public;
- Law on Real Property Transactions;
- Law on Amendments and Supplements to the Law on Non-Contentious Procedure;
- Law on Certification of Signatures, Manuscripts and Transcripts,

by providing in the above laws that all documents prepared and stamped by attorneys-at-law shall only be certified by notaries public, and by deleting the provisions therein that unconstitutionally transfer the powers of the courts of law to notaries public and unconstitutionally authorise notaries public to represent clients before the courts with regard to documents prepared by the notaries public.

2. The request that the provisions of Article 2 of the Law on Amendments and Supplements to the Law on Enforcement and Security be repealed under the urgent procedure.

3. The request that the basis for lump-sum taxation and calculation of contributions of attorneys-at-law in Serbia in the year 2014 be 10% lower than the basis assessed for each attorney-at-law in the year 2013, bearing in mind the following: the absence of inflation, the decrease in purchasing power of the population, the collapse of the economy, the general increase in unemployment, and the difficult economic situation in the country, and, in particular, the fact that since 2010 the work of attorneys-at-law has been hindered and obstructed by a series of reorganisations of courts and the fact that the amount of work of attorneys-at-law has drastically decreased due to the introduction of new judicial professions - notaries, enforcement agents, real estate agents, etc.; and the request that the fiscal policy towards attorneys-at-law in the coming period be based on clear and well-defined criteria to be established through an agreement between the Ministry of Finance, the Ministry of Justice and the legal profession.

4. The request that the Minister of Justice, Mr Nikola Selaković, be dismissed due to the unsuccessful reform of the judiciary, the proposing of unconstitutional laws and the fact that he did not

fulfil the promise given to the legal profession, namely that attorneys-at-law would not be discriminated against in relation to notaries public in the manner effected by the abovementioned laws.

The direct cause of the protest of attorneys-at-law is reflected in the amendments to the Law on Notary Public and the set of accompanying laws (Law on Real Property Transactions, Law on Amendments and Supplements to the Law on Non-Contentious Proceedings, Law on Certification of Signatures, Manuscripts and Transcripts), which the National Assembly of the Republic of Serbia adopted on 31 August 2014 by the urgent procedure and without a public debate, and which entered into force on 1 September 2014; these laws introduced a monopoly of notaries public into the legal system of the Republic of Serbia by giving them the exclusive authority to draw up all private legal transaction of the Serbian citizens in the form of a notarial act (real property transaction contracts and contracts in the fields of family law and inheritance law).

In accordance with the decisions of the three most relevant professional organisations of lawyers (Union Internationale des Avocats - UIA, International Bara Association - IBA, and Council of Bars and Law Societies of Europe - CCBE), a meeting was held with the representatives of the Ministry of Justice - namely, with Minister Nikola Selaković, Mr Čedomir Backović, Assistant to the Minister of Justice in charge of European integration, and Mr Dejan Carević, Director of the Directorate for the Administration of Seized Assets. The international associations of advocates and bars were represented by Mr András Szecskay of UIA, Mr Péter Köves of IBA, and Mr Péter S. Szabó of CCBE. The meeting was attended by the presidents of the bar associations of Serbia (Mr Dragoljub Đorđević, President of the Bar Association of Serbia, and the presidents of the constituent bars of the Bar association of Serbia: Mr Slobodan Šoškić, President of the Bar Association of Belgrade; Mr Srđan Sikimić, President of the Bar Association of Vojvodina; Ms Brankica Orlović, President of the Bar Association of Niš; Ms Jasmina Milutinović, President of the Bar Association of Čačak; Mr Slobodan Milutinović, President of the Bar Association of Šabac; Mr Zvonko Marković, President of the Bar Association of Kragujevac; Ms Gordana Ilić, President of the Bar Association of Požarevac; and Ms Biljana Dražević, President of the Bar Association of Zaječar).

Based on the agreement reached at the above meeting, the Bar Association of Serbia formed the expert team comprised of Ms Jasmina Milutinović, President of the Bar Association of Čačak, and Ms Mirjana Jovanović and Ms Tanja Arsić, both attorneys-at-law of Novi Sad and representatives in the Assembly of the Bar Association of Serbia; the Ministry of Justice formed the expert team consisting of Mr Čedomir Backović, Assistant to the Minister of Justice; Ms Nela Kuburović, Assistant to the Minister of Justice; and Prof. Dr Dejan Đurđević, Director of the State Legislation Secretariat.

The expert teams held a series of 10 meetings, whereupon the members of the expert teams signed the agreement specifying that the Law on Notary Public, the Law on Real Property Transactions, the Law on Non-Contentious Procedure, the Family Law, and the Inheritance Law should be amended as soon as possible and under the urgent procedure, in the manner stated in the addendum to the said agreement. The expert teams agreed that it was not necessary to amend the Law on Certification of Signatures, Manuscripts and Transcripts. The expert teams further concluded that the agreed amendments to the above laws were sufficient for the expert team of the Bar Association of Serbia to recommend that the bodies of the Bar Association of Serbia make a decision to terminate the protest with work stoppage of attorneys-at-law so that the legal profession could resume its work.

The above agreement was assessed positively by the management boards of all the constituent bars of the Bar Association of Serbia and by the Management Board of the Bar Association, while the Bar Association of Belgrade also scheduled an assembly session for 15 January 2015 so that its members could state their position on the agreement. The Bar Association of Serbia scheduled the Conference of Attorneys-at-Law of Serbia (the broadest form of participation of attorneys-at-law of Serbia in the decision-making process) and the Assembly of the Bar Association of Serbia for Friday 16 January 2015.

After the legal profession of Serbia presents its position on the agreement reached by the expert teams and the harmonised provisions of the Law on Amendments and Supplements to the Law on Notary Public and the set of related laws, the Ministry of Justice will implement the procedure of amending and supplementing the above specified legislation under the urgent procedure.

By analysing the agreed changes to the provisions of the Law on Amendments and Supplements to the Law on Notary Public and the accompanying laws, it can be concluded that the legal profession has managed to realise a majority, though not all of its requests set forth in the protest. Specifically, if the Assembly of the Bar Association of Serbia accepts the proposed amendments, and if they are subsequently adopted by the National Assembly of the Republic of Serbia, this will remove the monopoly of notaries public from the legal system and the legal profession will be given back most of the legal transactions it effected before the disputed legislative amendments of 31 August 2014.

In the future, the following legal transactions would be undertaken in the form of a notarial act: contracts on real property transactions by persons without legal capacity; contracts on real property transactions by persons unable to see, hear, speak, read and write; agreements on child/spousal support, in accordance with the law; mortgage contracts and mortgage declarations, provided that they contain an express statement by the debtor that, based on such mortgage contract or declaration, the performance of due obligation may be directly enforced upon maturity either through court or out-of-court procedure.

In particular, the following will be drawn up in the form of a notarised (*solemnised*) instrument: contracts on real property transactions; mortgage contracts and mortgage declarations that do not contain an express statement by the debtor that, based on such mortgage contract or declaration, the performance of due obligation may be directly enforced; contracts by which easements and personal servitudes are established; contracts in the area of inheritance law; life care contracts; contracts on transfer of inheritance share; post-nuptial agreement.

The instrument certification clause shall be placed on a separate document, joined by seal cord with the instrument submitted for certification, and the ends of the seal cord shall be fastened by wax or label and affixed by the seal of the notary public; the instrument thus certified by the notary public shall retain the properties of a private instrument. Private instruments may be drawn up in a free form by attorneys-at-law and by the citizens, if they have the necessary skills to do so.

Where the notary public establishes that a submitted instrument does not meet the conditions for drawing up, confirmation or certification, he/she shall issue a decision refusing to undertake the official action on the grounds of nullity of the contract. The law envisages court protection against such decisions (which the legal profession sees as a significant improvement).

The Government of the Republic of Serbia has already amended the Decree on taxes and stipulated that the increase in taxes for the year 2014 may not exceed 10%. We expect that certain irregularities in the implementation of the Decree will be addressed in cooperation with the Ministry of Finance and the Tax Administration, and that the negotiations will be continued with regard to the criteria for assessing the tax obligations of attorneys-at-law in 2015 and the coming years. According to the above agreement, the taxation criteria should be agreed on by 31 January 2015.

As regards the request of the legal profession for dismissal of the Minister of Justice, the management boards of the bar associations have stated that this request, although it will not be withdrawn, should not be regarded as a condition for the termination of the work stoppage.

We are of the opinion that if the harmonised legislative provisions were adopted by the National Assembly of the Republic of Serbia, it should be deemed that a significant portion of the requests of the legal profession have been met. However, much attention in the coming period must be given to amending the Action Plan for Chapter 23 - judiciary and fundamental rights - in the negotiations with the EU, particularly if one bears in mind the negative assessment of these areas by the EU. For this reason one can positively evaluate the part of the agreement by the expert teams of the Bar Association of

Serbia and the Ministry of Justice envisaging that the Government and the Bar Association of Serbia will appoint expert teams to consider necessary amendments to the Law on Enforcement and Security, the Law on Public Attorney's Office and the Public Procurement Law, and to withdraw the Draft Law on Legal Aid from the legislative procedure, and that the Bar Association of Serbia will delegate an expert team to participate in the adopting of the Law on Legal Aid. We would like to emphasise that the members of the expert teams agreed to improve the cooperation between the Ministry of Justice and the Bar Association of Serbia in the future, particularly with regard to legislative activities.

Although the expert team of the Bar Association of Serbia has repeatedly pointed to other shortcoming in the abovementioned legislation, specifically to those concerning the issue of constitutionality of the transfer of judicial powers to notaries public, the legal profession has not succeeded in its requests due to the firm position of the Ministry of Justice that the issue is a matter of the relationship between the judiciary and the executive power.

The Law on Notary Public is very problematic from the point of view of constitutionality, and the legal profession pointed to the unconstitutional provisions of this law during the negotiations with the Ministry of Justice. However, the Ministry did not consent to removing all the instances of unconstitutionality brought to its attention. The question of further harmonisation of this Law with the legal system as a whole remains valid and open, as does the need for adopting a new law.

With kind collegial regards,

Dragoljub Djordjevic, attorney-at-law
President of the Bar Association of Serbia

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No. 1376/14
26.11.2014.

Attn.:THE COUNCIL OF BARS AND LAW SOCIETIES OF EUROPE (CCBE)
Ms. Maria Slazak, President

Subject: final report about lawyers' protest in Serbia

Dear Ms. President,

I believe that you were informed that the lawyers in Serbia have protested by the suspension of work (with the prescribed minimum) for over four months. Lawyers` protest ended on January 26th 2015. Therefore, please find in the further course of this document the detailed report on the Serbian Bar Association protest 2014-2015.

THE REASONS AND CAUSES FOR THE PROTECT OF SERBIAN LAWYERS

The reasons for the protests are endangering the constitutionality and legality, a violation of the RS Constitution guaranteed rights of citizens, difficult access of citizens to justice, disabling the right to free choice of counsel, violation of the constitutional position of legal profession as an independent profession which provides legal assistance to citizens (Article 67 of the Constitution stipulates the right of citizens to the legal aid provided by the legal profession as an independent service and local government units).

Assembly of the Bar Association of Serbia on 13/09/2014 made a decision on organizing the protests of lawyers with work suspension starting from 17/09/2014 on the recommendation of the Conference of the Serbian Lawyers, which was held the same day. The Conference is the broadest form of expression of attorneys in Serbia and this held on 13/09/2014 at the Union Hall in Belgrade was attended by about 2,000 lawyers from throughout Serbia.

According to the decision of the Assembly of the Serbian Bar Association the requests of lawyers are: primary - the protection of constitutionality and legality of the amendments to the Law on Public Notaries and the sets of related laws (the Law on Real Estate, Law on Non-Contentious Proceedings, Law on Certification of Copies, Manuscripts, and Signatures, the Law on Enforcement and Security), and then a solution of the tax position of lawyers, dismissal of the Minister of Justice for proposing unconstitutional legislation and poor results of judicial reform.

VIOLATION OF THE CONSTITUTIONAL POSITION OF LEGAL PROFESSION AS AN INDEPENDENT SERVICE FOR PROVIDING LEGAL AID

Violation of autonomy, independence and advocacy self-regulation: In accordance with the general acts of the Bar Association of Serbia the minimum of work is established and the Instruction was issued to lawyers during a protest with work suspension number 895-4/2014 of 13/09/2014. The Minister of Justice in the public interpreted the Instruction as a threat to lawyers and asked the Bar Association of Serbia to rescind it within 48 hours of receipt of the formal letter of the Ministry (23/09/2014). As this Instruction is the act for implementation and has no character of general or individual legal act, and is primarily in the interest of clients, the Bar Association of Serbia as an independent and self-regulating professional organization of

lawyers, did not change the Instruction, after which the Minister of Justice proposed to the Government of the Republic of Serbia, and this made a decision on 25/09/2014 terminating the Instruction of the Bar Association of Serbia No. 895-4 / 2014 of 13/09/2014 until execution. The Ministry of Justice in the forming of its order to the Bar Association of Serbia and proposal to the Government of the Republic of Serbia for the legal basis relied on the provisions of the Law on State Administration and to those provisions relating to the control of the legality of labor of organizations exercising public powers that were transferred to them from the jurisdiction of the state administration. By this attitude the Ministry of Justice entirely ignored the constitutional position of legal profession, which was defined as an independent service providing legal assistance to citizens (Article 67 of the RS Constitution) and that their autonomy and independence achieves by organizing in the Serbian Bar Association and the bar associations in its constitution, by the adoption of general acts, by independent law practice, the decision on admission to the legal profession and on the termination of the practice of law (Article 2 of the Law on Legal Profession) and that public authority carries out on the basis of the RS Constitution and the Law on Legal profession (Articles 63, 64 and 65 of the Law on Legal Profession), and never on the basis of the Law on State Administration (Ministry of Justice HAS NOT BY a single act entrusted the Serbian Bar Association and the bar associations exercise of public authority in their jurisdiction in accordance with Article 137 of the RS Constitution). Following the adoption of the said decision of the Government of the Republic of Serbia, the Minister of Justice initiated proceedings before the Constitutional Court to review the constitutionality and legality of instruction to lawyers during the protest of lawyers with a work suspension. This procedure is ongoing.

THE REASONS FOR THE PROTEST

The essence of the complaint of the legal profession is that contrary to the Constitution of Serbia, international law and the laws of the state of Serbia MONOPOLIES WERE INTRODUCED IN FAVOR OF PUBLIC NOTARIES, who were exclusively authorized to make real estate contracts and agreements in the field of family and inheritance law. If these agreements are not made in the form of notary public records, they do not produce any legal effect. Notary Public tariff is much higher than the lawyers' fees, and fees for the certification of notary public records in relation to court fees which were in force before the introduction of public notaries in Serbia. Citizens are not able to draw up their own contracts and statements in case they have the necessary knowledge or to choose a lawyer who will provide them with the necessary legal assistance (Article 67 of the RS Constitution, Article 6 and 13 of the European Convention on Human Rights). Legal profession as the only professional activity determined by the Constitution of the Republic of Serbia for providing legal assistance by these provisions of the Law on Public Notaries, Law on Real Estate and related laws was completely excluded and from its jurisdiction was unconstitutionally excluded a significant part of the work the lawyers performed since the foundation of the profession. All the above regulations were adopted within three days, without any public discussion and without obtaining the opinion of the EU on the compliance of the proposals with the European legislation. In fact, all of the above laws were passed or changed urgently. All the controversial legislation was put in urgent parliamentary procedure on 27/8/2014, Assembly session started on 29/8/2014, MPs voted late at night on 31/08/2014, and the laws came into force on 01/09/2014.

In order to provide a broader opinion of the Serbian attorneys about the reasons, objectives and manner of conducting the protest the Congress of Serbian Lawyers was organized with international participation on 08/10/2014 in the Sava Centre which was attended by more than 4,000 lawyers from throughout Serbia (note: directories of lawyers enrolled approximately 8,500 lawyers in the whole of Serbia). In addition to lawyers from Serbia the Congress was attended by Mr. Aldo Bulgarelli, CCBE president, Mr. Ranko Pelicaric, co-chairman of the PECO committee CCBE who also represented the Croatian Bar Association, Mr. Nenad Janicevic, Regional Secretary of the UIA for South Eastern Europe, Mr. Etienne Lesage, a representative of the Bar Association of France and the Bar Association of Paris, Mr. Nikolaos Valergakis, president of the Bar Association of Thessaloniki, Mr. Peter Boskov, a representative of the Bar Association of Bulgaria, Mr. Janez Starman, vice president of the Bar Association of Slovenia, Mr. Branko Maric, president of the Bar Association of Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina, Mr. Tomislav Dedic, a spokesman of the Bar Association of Montenegro and Mr. Boro Tasevski, representative of the Bar Association of Macedonia.

Legal traffic was completely blocked, and the legal uncertainty is introduced in a big way. This is of particular importance with regard to the conclusion of the special operations with foreign investors who are

vital to overcoming the economic problems in which the Republic of Serbia is. Great investment contracts employ teams of dozens of experienced lawyers who have not only the knowledge of domestic law, but also in the field of international public and private international law. We can only imagine the consequences of the withdrawal of foreign investors from the announced or commenced activities in Serbia, if after several months of work on the preparation and conclusion of the contracts, as a condition for the realization of investments will be drafting a contract in the form of notary public record which is an absolute requirement under the current applicable regulations that legal profession seeks to be amended.

By prescribing obligation that certain contracts are made up only in the form of notary public record ALL NATURAL AND LEGAL PERSONS (i.e. duly authorized representatives of the legal entity) in Serbia EXCEPT THE NOTARIES were brought to an absurd situation of being deprived of working capacity. Because of these norms in the Law on Public Notaries, Law on Real Estate nobody, except a notary public, has a legal and working capacity to enter into any contract in the field of real estate transactions, family and inheritance law, or make a record of the meeting of the company, which has more than 100 members.

Legal profession in a warning three-day protest in June 2014 drew attention to the problem of taking away jobs of the legal profession (public notary). However, the Ministry of Justice did not pay any attention to that warning. Truth be told at a meeting held in the Ministry of Finance in early July 2014 which was attended by Mr. Nikola Selakovic in front of more than 15 lawyers who attended the meeting, the Minister of Justice stated that there will be no exclusivity for notaries, but he did not keep his promise.

In terms of the requirements of protests relating to the tax position of lawyers, in July, it was proposed the establishment of a working group which for five months did nothing, neither the Ministry of Finance nor Ministry of Justice during entire "negotiations" gave any concrete proposal for a solution to the tax position of lawyers. At each meeting in the name of the Ministry appeared new representatives who have "always been ignorant." Therefore, legal profession due to irresponsible and unprofessional attitude of the Ministry of Justice and the Ministry of Finance in the part of the tax position of lawyers was forced to decide to organize a protest with work suspension.

Since the decision of the Assembly of the Serbian Bar Association 13/09/2014 and the beginning of the protest, the Ministry of Justice has been ignorant of lawyers, their protest and the fact that the trials do not take place and that the judiciary was under blockade.

In the period from 17/09/2014 to 01/10/2014 the conferences were held of lawyers and protest rallies in all the bar associations in the composition of the Bar Association of Serbia, with almost one hundred percent of members of bar associations supporting the protest of lawyers with the suspension of work. Serbian lawyers fully supported the reasons and goals of the protest and the established minimum work.

During all this time the Minister did not accept invitations to talk, but through various media appearances tried to break the unity of the legal profession, as will be discussed in the second part of the report.

At an informal meeting held on 10/10/2014 by the mediation of lawyer Dragan Palibrk and Borivoje Borovic attended by attorney Nemanja Beric, the Minister of Justice had given to Mr. Dragoljub Djordjevic, the President of the Bar Association of Serbia and Mr. Slobodan Soskic, President of the Bar Association of Belgrade the proposal which is "acceptable for the Ministry " in response to the demands of the lawyers' protest. This proposal has not been given an official form (the proposal was given with no memorandum, signature and stamp of the Ministry of Justice) and contained a number of elements. With regard to request for amendments to the Law on Public Notaries and a set of accompanying legislation the Minister has conditioned any conversation by the end of the work suspension and suggested forming a working group which would be composed of three representatives of the legal profession and three representatives of the Ministry. This working group would become operational by end of the work suspension and by taking into account the decisions of the Constitutional Court, would work on harmonization of legislation bearing in mind the interest of attorneys and interest of citizens, without specifying the period in which these proposals would be found. The Minister of Justice also suggested that the Ministry of Justice and representatives of legal profession file a common request to the Constitutional Court to urgently take into consideration already submitted initiatives for assessing the constitutionality of the law in relation to public notaries. In terms of the requirements for the regulation of the tax position of lawyers the Minister of Justice suggested that by applying uniform calibration factors the increase of taxes

compared to the year 2013 cannot be greater than 10%. The proposal itself is vaguely formulated in this part without clearly defined bases, unique calibration factors and unknown was the position of the Minister of Finance in relation to this proposal. In the part which relates to the requirements of the protest regarding the tax position of lawyers it is proposed that representatives of the legal profession, the Ministry of Justice and Ministry of Finance should make arrangements regarding the definition of objective indicators based on which will be conducted lump sum taxation of lawyers starting from 01/01/2015. The representatives of the legal profession on an informal meeting with the Minister of Justice pointed out that by the general acts of the Bar Association of Serbia it was established a clear decision-making procedure and that no president of the Bar Association is authorized to make a decision without the authority of the Bar Association of Serbia.

The same day, a meeting was held of the Protest Committee of the Bar Association of Serbia, which consisted of the presidents and / or representatives of bar associations in the composition of the Bar Association of Serbia. The protest committee unanimously concluded that the organization of the meeting without an official invitation to the Bar in the prescribed manner, with the participation of lawyers who are not elected representatives of the legal profession, and making proposals with no indication who makes a proposal (without letterheads, signatures and seals) and without establishing clear and precise deadlines is not an acceptable method of communication and cannot give suggestion which may be the basis for negotiations. Immediately after the declaration of all the presidents of the bar associations in the composition of the Serbian Bar Association, the Bar Association of Serbia informed the Serbian public about the attitude of the legal profession. The protest committee of the Serbian Bar Association welcomed the fact of the talks, and that baselines, formulated during the meeting, represented an acceptable basis for further negotiations (with the need to be defined and put into time frames). President of the Bar Association of Serbia on the same day, after the meeting, informed the Minister of Justice on the position of the presidents of the bar associations in respect of the proposed solutions. The part of the proposal relating to the formation of a working group which task would be to harmonize the legislation taking into account the decisions of the Constitutional Court, bearing in mind both the interest of lawyers and interest of citizens, the President of the Bar Association of Serbia informed the Minister of Justice that there was no need to form a special work group and that legal profession would deliver proposals to amend the Law on Public Notaries and sets of related laws to 12/10/2014.

Working groups established within the Bar Association of Vojvodina prepared a draft proposal for amending the Law on Public Notaries, Law on Real Estate, Law on Non-Contentious Proceedings, Law on Certifying Copies, Manuscripts and Signatures, the Law on Enforcement and Security, Law on Public Attorney's Office and Law on Public Procurement. All the bar associations in the composition of the Bar Association of Serbia stated their opinions on the suggested amendments electronically by accepting the proposed changes. Suggestions of the legal profession in Serbia were delivered by electronic mail to the Ministry of Justice on 12/10/2014 in the evening, and through the registration office of 13/10/2014.

The Ministry of Justice did not respond to the proposal of the legal profession in Serbia.

Legal profession in Serbia held a protest gathering in front of the Government of the Republic of Serbia on 20/10/2014 which brought together more than 4,000 lawyers in Serbia. The protest was held under the slogan "silence to silence."

On 22/10/2014 the Minister of Justice sent individual invitations to all bar associations to meet separately, without the invitation to the Bar Association of Serbia. The presidents of bar associations have indicated that it was unacceptable to hold individual meetings without the participation of the Bar Association of Serbia, after which the Ministry of Justice by accepting this attitude proposed holding a joint meeting of 23/10/2014.

On 23/10/2014 a meeting was held between representatives of the Ministry of Justice and representatives of Serbian legal profession. At the meeting, the Minister of Justice presented the draft amendments to the Law on Public Notaries and the Law on Real Estate, for which the bar associations in the composition of the Serbian Bar Association and the Board of the Bar Association of Serbia evaluated that the proposed changes do not represent a significant change in the substance of the Law on Public Notaries. All bar associations held sessions of their managing boards, after which the managing board was held of the Bar Association of Serbia. A unique position was made that legal profession deemed unacceptable the offer of

the Ministry of Justice given to the Bar Association of Serbia on 23/10/2014 because it considered it unacceptable as the suggested amendments to the Law on Public Notaries and the Law on Real Estate were still discriminatory in relation to the practice of law and the limit of citizens' rights to independent conclusion of legal matters was not removed. The Ministry of Justice in its offer on amending the Law on Public Notaries and the Law on Real Estate has not declared on the proposals submitted by the Bar Association of Serbia dated 12/10/2014, i.e. 13/10/2014. On the basis of the offer of the Ministry of Justice in paragraph 2 the notaries still retained the authority to draw up real estate contracts and other documents while citizens and lawyers only declaratory have that right.

Changes in offer further imply that real estate contracts are made up in the form of notary public records which are only made by public notaries.

Thus, a contract drawn up by a citizen or a lawyer cannot in its original form and text to go the way from private to public document. Contract made by a citizen or lawyer does not have legal effect (it is null and void). Such a contract loses its original form, because there is no possibility to only certify the signatures (legalization) and must undergo a procedure of solemnization, which means that a notary public must re-compile SUCH AGREEMENT in the form of notary public record.

Legal profession urged the Ministry of Justice to re-examine the proposals for amendments to the Law on Public Notaries and other laws covered by the proposal of the Bar Association of Serbia on 12/10/2014, in which the existing legal solutions are aligned with the RS Constitution and the applicable substantive regulations and is thus eliminated the collapse of the legal system and the rule of law.

The proposal of the Bar Association of Serbia, which was submitted to the Ministry of Justice and that applies to **solemnization** means that all private documents can be solemnized by a notary public preparing **a special notary public act, which is added to a private document and makes its integral part**. This means that a contract made by the people or lawyers remains in its original form, and notary public in the process of solemnization to this contract adds, respectively, i.e. associates with this contract a special act **confirming the contents of a private document**.

In particular, it is pointed to the proposal of the Bar Association of Serbia on returning into the legal system of the state, to the full extent, the certification of private documents (legalization) because such a form is supported by substantive laws of the Republic of Serbia.

Despite disagreements of the legal profession, the Minister of Justice sent a proposal to the procedure for amending the Law on Public Notaries and the Law on Real Estate showing in public that the requirements of the legal profession were thus adopted, although this is not true. These proposals were adopted in the parliamentary debate under urgent procedure again, without public debate, while showing that the requirements of legal profession were met which is not true. President of the Republic signed the laws on amendments and changes to the Law on Public Notaries and Law on Real Estate and in his statement said that the he thought that these laws were meeting the demands of the legal profession and that lawyers' protest was justified.

After the protest of lawyers was organized in front of the Government of the Republic of Serbia on 20/10/2014 which was attended by more than 4,000 lawyers from throughout Serbia, a meeting was held at the Ministry of Finance on 06/11/2014 and the proposal was given for solving a tax position, which was a good basis for agreement but needed certain refinements. The Minister of Justice conditioned the achievement of that agreement by the suspension of work, although the Ministry of Finance does not have this request. In the proposed draft agreement which provided only for the regulation of the tax position of lawyers as signatories appear the Ministry of Finance, which is responsible for the area of tax policy, the Ministry of Justice, although the subject of the agreement is not within the jurisdiction of this Ministry and the Bar Association of Serbia. The provision of conditioning the agreement was entered at the request of the Minister of Justice.

The Serbian legal profession has organized another protest on Tuesday, 4/11/2014 at Nikola Pasic Square in Belgrade under the slogan "One minute to twelve" which was attended by more than 5,000 Serbian lawyers. This protest gathering was organized at the time of the discussion before the National Assembly on proposals for amending the Law on Public Notaries and the Law on Real Estate. During the

parliamentary debate grossest insults were imposed to the profession as a whole. The MPs of the parliamentary majority with the imposition of unfounded insults tried to equate lawyers with clients, to link advocacy with some sort of *coup d'état* attempts, the protest of lawyers justified with the so-called connections with tycoons against whom criminal proceedings are in course and whose goal is not to be convicted and thus financed lawyers in protest (we remind you that 8,500 lawyers in Serbia participate in the protest).

On the occasion of this announcement of the President of the Republic, published after the adoption of the amendments to the Law on Public Notaries and the Law on Real Estate that, in the opinion of the President of the Republic, the requests of the attorneys were adopted and there was no reason for further strikes, the Serbian Bar Association has requested an audience with the President of the Republic of Serbia and this meeting is scheduled for Friday, 14/11/2014.

The introduction of the system of public notaries in Serbia was accompanied by very aggressive advertising message on national TV networks allegedly with the support of the NGO GIZ, from Germany. Lawyers in Serbia have realized that behind this organization for financing with 90% stands the Republic of Germany, and this was the reason for asking questions whether it is possible that one of the most influential countries in the EU can stand behind this ill-legal project, to the detriment of all citizens of Serbia. We have stated this publicly, after which we had a call from the Ambassador of the Republic of Germany, with whom we had a meeting at the highest level on 10/11/2014. On this occasion we were informed that the organization had taken part in advising the Ministry of Justice during a project of this law, that there was no direct investment in money, but they paid professionals - experts who provided advisory services to the Ministry of Justice. What is most important is the assurance provided by the Ambassador of Germany that neither Republic of Germany nor GIZ are behind the model law on public notaries which has been applied in Serbia since 01/09/2014.

OTHER RELATED NOTES

The Minister of Justice in August 2014 appointed 94 notaries, although the Law on Public Notaries as the minimum number for the formation of a notary public chamber provided 100 public notaries. This means that the decision on the establishment of notary public chamber is illegal and that the chamber was not able to start working. If a public notary chamber has not met the statutory requirements for the operation, it could not have made legal decisions or determined whether the conditions for the start of the public notaries work were met. Notary public chamber, by the law assesses whether a notary office meets prescribed requirements, determines whether the contract is concluded on security from harm in the performance of professional services and renders a decision on the fulfillment of conditions of work and the beginning of each notary public's work. This has not been done for the first 94 appointed public notaries, and therefore they were not able to begin working.

These deficiencies have resulted, according to the opinion of the legal profession, that all notary public records made from 01/09/2014 until the date of preparation of this report, and in the future legally null and void.

In the process of appointing the first 94 public notaries some irregularities have been observed that also cast doubt on the decision on their appointment. According to the knowledge of the Bar Association of Serbia, unelected candidates who participated in the first competition for the selection and appointment of notaries initiated legal proceedings challenging these decisions.

A particular problem is the gross violation of judicial independence and the introduction of control over the work of the courts from the executive power. How was it done? Well, in the territory of the basic courts where a notary public is not appointed, the courts (read judges) make notary public records although they have not passed notary public exam, nor are they appointed to this office, and in the case of judicial proceedings should appreciate the legality of certain notary public records. Control of the work of public notaries is performed by the Ministry of Justice and the notary public chamber. So, when a judge shall hold office for a notary public and constitute a notary public record he is controlled by the Ministry of Justice. The judge is the holder of judicial power and his autonomy and independence is guaranteed by the Constitution of the Republic of Serbia (Article 4, paragraph 4 of the RS Constitution). The Ministry of Justice is the state administration body that is accountable to the Government of the Republic of Serbia for

its work, which is the executive authority. RS Constitution as the fundamental principle of democratic order established the division to the three branches of government that are in mutual balance and control. The state administration body should not and cannot exercise control on a separate and independent judicial authority.

The legal profession in its protest also pointed to the violation of the Constitution of the Republic of Serbia regarding the division to the three branches of government and the unconstitutional transfer of certain activities that are within the exclusive jurisdiction of the notary public.

The reaction of the Ministry of Justice to the decision of the Assembly of the Serbian Bar Association of 13/09/2014 on the protest of lawyers with a work suspension is that it is possible to talk about taxes, but not the amendments of the Law on Public Notaries and sets of related laws. However, the fact that the Ministry has proposed certain amendments to the Law on Public Notaries and Law on Real Estate is a confirmation of justification and request of legal profession and the protest, although these changes were not the result of an agreement with the legal profession or represent the fulfillment of demands of the protest.

The Ministry of Justice has begun a media campaign against lawyers instead of negotiations, the bar associations and managements of the bar associations. In this media campaign were used inappropriate expressions and comments such as: legal profession is drowsy backwater that has to realize that it needs to be changed, lawyers are troublemakers - who used the situation before the introduction of notaries, the managements of bar associations are illegitimate, they are inadequate and without authority, they are Mafia lawyers, the protest of lawyers is politicized because it seeks the dismissal of the Minister of Justice and why the lawyers protest was not organized in 2011 when the Law on Public Notary was passed.

It is true that the lawyers did not protest in 2011 at the time of the adoption of the basic law on notaries, but then there was no need for protests, because this wording of the law has not introduced public notary monopoly, but by changes and amendments that were adopted in 2013 and 2014, and by adopting the set of related laws: the Law on Real Estate and the Law on Non-Contentious Proceedings.

In the main news programs of public television service the Minister of Justice has warned lawyers that they have performed a criminal offense of obstruction of justice; that they must be prepared to bear the consequences, and that no one can "beat" the state, not even lawyers.

The Bar Association of Serbia informed the CCBE (The Council of Bars and Law Societies of Europe) and UIA (Union Internationale des Avocats) of the current problems faced by citizens and legal practice in Serbia and both organizations sent letters with expressions of concern to Aleksandar Vucic, Prime Minister of the Republic of Serbia. Prime Minister to whom the letters were addressed has not personally responded. But to the letter that the CCBE sent to the Prime Minister replied Mr. Cedomir Backovic, Assistant Minister of Justice for European integration to whom the letter was not addressed and who stated serious lies in his reply (like the one that lawyers can prepare real estate contracts).

At a ceremony organized in London to mark the start of the trials in 2014 the president of the Bar Association of Serbia informed the present presidents and representatives of bar associations from 77 countries on the problems faced by legal professionals in Serbia and they have provided support and offered any assistance in solving the problems.

Both CCBE and UIA are seeking a meeting with the Prime Minister of the Republic of Serbia, but the request has not been answered.

On the day of the Congress of the Serbian Bar held on 08/10/2014 a meeting was held between the President of the CCBE – Mr. Aldo Bulgarelli, co-chairman of the PECO committee of CCBE – Mr. Ranko Pelicaric and Regional Secretary of UIA for South East Europe – Mr. Nenad Janicevic and Mr. Nikola Selakovic, Minister of Justice, Mrs. Biljana Pavlovic, Secretary of State and Mr. Cedomir Backovic, deputy minister for European Integration and International Project .

From the information provided on the congress by the representatives of international organizations about the meeting held at the Ministry of Justice the start of talks was announced with representatives of the legal profession on all contentious issues, however, in the course of the congress the Minister of Justice issued a

statement and repeated what he often argued that he called the lawyers to talk about taxes, but that amending the Law on Public Notaries and sets of related laws cannot be a subject of the talks.

Throughout the protests, instead of negotiations, the Ministry of Justice has tried to break the unity of the legal profession by publishing an anonymous letter purportedly sent by a group of lawyers who want to work but are "afraid of repression of the Bar Association and erasure from the directory of lawyers." The Minister of Justice, rather than send an official invitation to meet with the presidents of bar associations besides trying to discredit in public through the media, through informal groups of lawyers who are not members of any of the bodies in the Bar Association of Serbia or some regional bar associations within the Bar Association of Serbia, tried to show that he talks with the legal profession.

A particular problem is the fact that the Minister of Justice has repeatedly prejudged the decision of the Constitutional Court on the submitted initiatives for assessing the constitutionality and legality of the issues in the law, and the decision of the Administrative Court in an administrative dispute that may be waged against the judgment of the Disciplinary Tribunal of the Bar Association, by which he roughly injured autonomy and independence of the courts. There is a reason to believe that due to the kind of pressure the Minister of Justice imposed the President of the Constitutional Court gave a statement to the media that the lawyers' protest put pressure on the Constitutional Court, which would elaborate all the initiatives on the constitutionality of the aforementioned law, although these initiatives did not meet the criteria of urgency.

The Minister of Justice of the Republic of Serbia, Mr. Nikola Selakovic, criticized us after a visit to his Excellency the Ambassador of the EU to Serbia, Michael Davenport that we complained without reason to "Europe" and that's not good because we have our own relevant ministry with which we can solve all the problems. Naively, we believed that it was indeed possible to have constructive and substantive conversation, but we were wrong. The peak occurred just one day before the protest of Serbian lawyers at Nikola Pasic Square. The protest carrying a symbolic name: "In one minute to twelve" held on 04/11/2014 was attended by nearly six thousand lawyers from all over Serbia (before on 08/10/2014 the congress of lawyers in the Sava Centre was attended by 4,500 attorneys and a protest rally in front of the government building on 20/10/2014, gathered about 5,000 lawyers), as a result of parliamentary debate on the adoption of amendments to the Law on Public Notaries and the Law on Real Estate that was represented by uncivilized level of the ruling party MPs against the legal profession in Serbia. It was clear that this was the message that was sent directly to lawyers by the party chairman and Prime Minister, Mr. Aleksandar Vucic. After that night to anyone who cares to strict principles of the profession has become unequivocally clear that this is an unprecedented lynching of the law practice in Serbia by the executive power. At this point, it remains a possibility to appeal to international public and professional associations with brotherly calling for help. There is no doubt that the executive power in Serbia in the harshest manner so far ever seen in the history of the Serbian legal profession since its inception (1862) tried to make this profession controlled and thus put an end to the non-biased and professional protection of basic human rights. It turned out that the reasons for the protest, the principal one, i.e. the introduction of the Law on Public Notaries and the other, regulating the tax position of lawyers in Serbia with the request for the dismissal of the Minister of Justice have just opened and showed the seriousness and gravity of the problem in which the legal profession in Serbia is. The moment in which we are now, after almost sixty days of full suspension of work has shown that the protest of Serbian lawyers with work suspension and the way in which it was organized were just the right way for the final "fall of masks," and that in all its seriousness proves the fact of serious disorders in the rule of law, the right of security and the position of an independent self-regulating legal profession that has these prerogatives primarily for the protection of basic human rights, and not for protecting themselves.

In addition, the Ombudsman of the Republic of Serbia initiated the process of supervising the work of the Ministry of Justice in respect of the introduction of the notary public system in Serbia and that he has published an opinion on the completion of the procedure, which is enclosed. We are also informing you that the Anti-corruption Agency initiated proceedings against the Minister of Justice because of a conflict of interest in the selection of judicial officials and that there is ongoing proceedings against the Minister and his closest associates regarding objections to the procedure for the notary public examinations and procedure of appointing first 94 notaries. As these proceedings before the Anti-corruption Agency have not yet been legally finalized, we are not able to deliver complete documentation.

On the problems faced by citizens and the legal profession in Serbia were informed the EU mission in Belgrade and the Commission for EU accession through the CCBE and representatives of Romania and Bulgaria in the Commission.

At the request of the Bar Association of Serbia the CCBE has formed a special team of experts in order to assist the Republic of Serbia in negotiations, especially in chapters 3, 23, 24 of the EU Accession Treaty. The Ministry of Justice has responded to the offer of the CCBE after more than three months at the insistence of the Bar Association of Serbia, on the grounds that they did not have time earlier to respond due to the holiday season and the preparation of an action plan for negotiations. The first area in which the European experts wanted and could help was precisely this action plan.

THE VENUE LEADING TO AN OUTCOME

Ms. President, as agreed on the last CCBE meeting in Bruxelles at the end of November 2014, the letter was drawn in order to be sent jointly by the CCBE, UIA and IBA to the Prime Minister of the Republic of Serbia, Mr. Aleksandar Vučić, and to the Minister of Justice of the Republic of Serbia, Mr. Nikola Selaković. The draft letter was drawn under joint efforts of Mr. Roman Završek, President of the Slovenian Bar Association, Mr. Nikola Dodevski, President of the Macedonian Bar Association, Mr. Branko Marić, President of the Bar of the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina, Mr. Dragoljub Djordjević, President of the Serbian Bar Association and Mr. Dejan Ukropina, Secretary General of the Vojvodina Bar Association.

Draft letter was sent to all three organizations from the Serbian Bar Association.

The essence of the letter was a call for a meeting with the Prime Minister and the Minister of Justice of the Republic of Serbia with representatives of all three respected organizations in order to reach a solution and restore the rule of law and access to justice in the Republic of Serbia. The meeting was finally scheduled for December 10th, 2014, at 20.00 hrs at the premises of the Government of the Republic of Serbia.

From the legal profession, the meeting was attended by Mr. Andras Szecskay, Attorney at Law from Budapest, representing UIA, Mr. Peter Koves, Attorney at Law from Budapest, representing IBA, Mr. Peter Szabo, Attorney at Law from Budapest, representing CCBE, Mr. Dragoljub Djordjević, President of the Serbian Bar Association, presidents of all regional bar associations – Mr. Slobodan Šoškić (Belgrade), Mr. Srdjan Sikimić (Vojvodina), Ms. Jasmina Milutinović (Čačak), Ms. Brankica Orlović (Niš), Mr. Zvonko Marković (Kragujevac), Ms. Gordana Ilić (Požarevac), Mr. Slobodan Milutinović (Šabac) and Ms. Biljana Dražević (Zaječar), together with Mr. Ivan Milošević (media consultant) and Mr. Dejan Ukropina (consultant and court intepreter).

From the Ministry of Justice, the meeting was attended by Mr. Nikola Selaković, Minister, Mr. Čedomir Backović, deputy minister for European Integration and International Project and Mr. Dejan Carević, director of Directorate for the Administration of Seized Assets.

During nearly 5 hours of discussion the Ministry representatives were informed on all the problems with the notary system being introduced, the appointment of notaries, establishment of the Notary Bar, broad authorities of notaries reflecting directly to legal profession, rule of law and acces to justice, lacks in procedure of enacting the Law itself and many other negative aspects of such service in a context of its establishment, social impacts, impacts to other professions etc. Apart from those negative points, it was pointed out that the legal profession is not against the notary system but only has objections to the aforesaid aspects.

After the meeting the resolution was issued emphasizing the necessity for negotiations and readiness of both sides to start constructive discussion aimed to overcome the existing problems. The negotiations started soon after the meeting and were lasting until the mid January 2015. During the negotiations of three-member teams representing the Serbian Bar and the Ministry the total number of 10 was organized. Each meeting lasted between 4 and 5 hours.

During hard discussion the position of the Ministry of Justice was more political than legal. Therefore, no relevant legal arguments against the Serbian Bar position and protest requests were presented. On the other side, the Bar Association team managed to refute, with relevant legal arguments, all standing points of the

Ministry and to point out the legal foundation for the necessity of amendments to the Law on Notaries and related legal texts. Finally, the majority of the requests and proposals coming from the Bar Association were adopted.

The Ministry, respecting the Bas Association proposals and the agreement reached, drafted the relevant texts amending the Law on Notaries, Law on Real Estate Trade and Law on Out-of-the-Court-Proceeding. Amendments were adopted as agreed by the Assembly of the Republic of Serbia on January 21st, 2015.

Furthermore, the Law on Free Legal Aid was taken out of the procedure in order to be re-drafted in accordance with the proposal of the Serbian Bar Association. The work on this text is being finished recently and the majority proposals of the Serbian Bar were adopted.

The Management board of the Serbian Bar Association organized a session in Subotica on January 22nd, 2015, and decided that the protest is over and that all attorneys should start with work on January 26th, 2015.

The very important fact related to such an outcome was also a visit of Ms. Vera Yurova, Commissioner for Justice, Consumers and Gender Equality of the European Comission on December 12, 2015, who said that the Government of the Republic of Serbia should resolve the issues pointed by the legal profession as soon as possible in order for the European Commission not to interfere.

CONCLUSIONS

Dear Ms. President, with cordial and sincere gratitude for the engagement of the CCBE in resolution of the protest and fulfilling of objectives set by the Serbian Bar Association related to laws amendments and restoration of the rule of law, access to justice and dignity of the legal profession, we would like to say that not all of the protest objectives and requests were adopted.

Namely, the request for the resignation of the current Ministry of Justice Mr. Nikola Selaković is still pending althought the Bar Association is at the position that this request, set during the protest, should have not been a condition for end of the abstention from courts.

Furthermore, we still have no reply from the Ministry related to the Public Procurement Law and the Public Defender Law, also subject of the protest, but agreed to be negotiated after the end of the protest. The Serbian Bar Association sent two letters of urgency to the Ministry but with no reply whatsoever.

Therefore, we are still facing some legal issues detrimental to the legal profession in the Republic of Serbia, but with a hope that we would overcome such position with no need of further CCBE and other organizations involvement.

Over the past year, the Bar Association of Serbia faced a big challenge regarding the independence of advocacy as a profession. We engaged in a protest action for almost 6 months regarding certain changes in the Law on Notary Public and taxes on attorneys and have emerged from action with stronger organization.

We learned some lessons from our protest:

During 2014, several laws came into effect introducing a notary system in Serbia. There were also changes to the tax law that adversely impacted attorneys. The law on notaries was our primary concern because it created a new class of legal representatives licensed by the MOJ who were given exclusive jurisdiction over a
large number of legal transactions. We objected to this law because it:

- Violated the status and independence afforded advocates by the Serbian Constitution
- Limited access to justice for citizens (less than 100 notaries were licensed), and
- jeopardized freedom to contract for Serbian citizens

The laws came into effect in September of 2014.

The SBAR decided to protest passage and implementation of these laws by organizing a strike by advocates in the entire territory of Serbia beginning on 17 September 2014. The protest was designed to raise public awareness of the effect of these laws and the consequent impact on the rule of law and to pressure government to open a dialogue regarding these laws that was responsive to the Bar, other interested parties and the public. The protest was a huge risk for our Bar Association. Our members would not appear in court, leaving clients without representation in court, possibly alienating other members of the justice system like judges and prosecutors, risking adverse public opinion and leaving advocates without income. We

weighed all of these factors – most keenly the issue of client representation – but felt that a comprehensive strike of court proceedings was the only recourse we had to get our message across. Ultimately, we came to a compromise with the government in January of this past
camr to a compromise with the government in January 2015 and we are presently working with MOJ in working groups regarding the passage of the other laws that may affect advocates.

How did we do this?

We have over 8,000 advocates as members – for this protest to be successful we needed the support of our members. This protest was not a top down decision but one that came from and was supported by our members and we worked hard to ensure that throughout the action. These are some of the strategies we followed that helped us succeed.

- We kept our members informed of everything that was happening

We knew for the members to hold firm in the protest they would need to be aware of everything that we were doing and that was going in with strike. We developed a special web portal developed in the beginning of protest to keep our members (and the public) advised of what was going on with the strike. We also used social media like twitter to communicate with our members and update them on news and events. They could also post on these media – so we kept the lines of communication open. When we began negotiating with the MOJ we kept our membership aware of what we were doing at every step. This was important to the Chamber ultimately accepting the solution we crafted.

- We engaged our membership in the protest

We involved our members in the protest, but organizing strike actions and events to keep them engaged in the protest and fully aware of what was going on. Again we used our website portal and other social media to organize protest gatherings to bring advocates together. This involved them in the protest and showed the
Chamber's resolve and unity on the issue. We planned public rallies to raise awareness of the protest and issues involved. We supported the regional bar chambers in their efforts to organize attorneys in their region in protest actions.

- We kept our message clear and principled

We had three target audiences that we needed to reach with our message: our members as discussed above to keep them engaged, key decision-makers in the justice sector to communicate our position and the general public to garner support. We kept our message consistent, clear and on principled grounds. We didn't get
into politics. We were protesting these new laws in order to protect the constitutional status and independence of our profession and to ensure citizen's access to justice.

- We actively engaged with media

We broadcast new information every day through our website and through media channels. We used local media as much as possible who were open to broadcasting our message. We issued press releases, held conferences and roundtables, gave interviews, organized public rallies and issued open letters – all to get our message across.

- We reached out to our allies

We identified and reached out to our allies – professors, analysts and NGOS within Serbia to show their support for our action. We also reached out to other bar chambers – notably CCBE and Union Internationals des Avocats – who supported our position and could provide support from outside Serbia, bringing an international dimension to the issue. All of these tactics were critical to our success. The protest was long, there were attacks in the media, there were efforts to divide the chamber and even create new chambers.... But we were able to withstand all of this.

What we gained from our protest?

- Thanks to the protest, citizens in Serbia took the SBAR as a protector of the Constitution, of the rule of law, and of their human rights. They see our profession as socially accountable and not as only self-interest guided profession.

- SBAR membership became more aware of importance of existence of a strong, democratic and transparent association of attorneys as a guard of their independence and profession.

- SBAR strengthened its position before the executive, and became a partner to the Serbia MOJ when about changing legislation of relevance to the Bar, and consequently to citizens in Serbia.

- SBAR heard recognitions from the Bars in region and international association of lawyers for its conduct and for final results of its protest. SBAR has been taken by the EU Delegation to Serbia as an important factor for contribution towards strengthening the rule of law in the country, as one of the preconditions for Serbia's accession to the EU.

With kind collegial regards,

Dragoljub Djordjevic, attorney-at-law
President of the Bar Association of Serbia