



Address by First Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Serbia Ivica Dacic at the ceremony of presentation of diplomas to 2014/2015 Diplomatic Academy graduates:

"Dear Diplomatic Academy graduates,
Distinguished professors and colleagues,

It is my distinct pleasure to address you on the occasion of the presentation of diplomas to our Diplomatic Academy graduates. This time again, I cannot but reflect upon the foreign policy objectives and performance of the Republic of Serbia, on the one hand, and the vision of a good diplomat, on the other.

Every period in history is fraught with challenges of its own. Modern times are a potential turning point in the development of international relations. The imminent multi-polarity that is to replace the unipolar world, the crises in Ukraine and the Middle East, migrant crisis, international terrorism, environmental issues that the future of our civilization hinges upon, political and economic redefinition of the development courses in many countries, separatist aspirations in strong democracies – to name just a number of current developments in the world of ever greater and more evident interdependence.

Against this background, what is the role of the foreign policy of Serbia and its diplomacy? Today, in particular, when Serbia no longer has time to sit idly by.

Given the increased complexity of international relations and heightened tensions, Serbia decided to commit itself to a principled and balanced foreign policy, setting its own interests, rather than the interests of others, as absolute priorities.

Continued efforts aimed at Serbia's EU accession process, while developing parallel friendly relations with the Russian Federation, PR China and all other countries, protection of the Serbian population and its cultural heritage in Kosovo and Metohija, active contribution to the stability in the region and intensification of international economic cooperation can be deemed Serbia's constant political interests.

The results achieved by Serbia in 2015 have been recognized even by people with differing political views. Let us single out just a few, chronologically:

- Signing of the Annex to the Brussels Agreement on 25 August, whose essential part is related

to the establishment of the Community of Serbian Municipalities in KiM;

- Diplomatic activities preventing Kosovo's admission to UNESCO;
- General assessment of Serbia's highly successful OSCE Chairmanship in delicate circumstances, crowned by the organization of the Ministerial Council, as one of the major diplomatic events ever held in our country;
- Opening of negotiating Chapters 32 and 35, proving that the European Union sees Serbia as a serious state with a significant role, expected to be a reliable partner not only in the regional context;
- Many visits on the highest level, always requiring extensive preparations and efforts of all those dealing with international cooperation in the state administration.

The participants in all these activities were numerous diplomats, ranging from most junior attaches to most experienced ambassadors, including civil servants involved in international cooperation in their departments.

With this in mind, as First Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs, I take the opportunity to thank all those who have made a contribution to the achievement of the foreign policy objectives and interests of the Republic of Serbia in the international arena.

I am pleased to say that many diplomats by successfully completing their tasks have set an example of the kind of qualities required for this difficult profession. Those involved in diplomacy need to be specially trained individuals of wide general cultural interests, highly knowledgeable of public international law and diplomatic law, au fait with their national history and the history of the international relations, equipped with negotiating skills and communicative abilities, showing tact in various situations, fostering tolerance as a form of expression, and being adamant and firm in the defence of their national interests.

Apart from the aforesaid, diplomacy is, by all means, tied up with personal aptitude for the job. Someone will find it easy, while others will find it much harder to meet the requirements that might, with the lapse of time, become increasingly difficult.

I am confident, nevertheless, that however challenging the upcoming tasks may seem, they will not pose a problem to those who recognize and foster deep down as the source of their personal motivation, the essential principle of what it means to be a diplomat – an acute awareness of the need to serve the common cause.

For every civil servant, especially for a diplomat representing his/her own country, it means that national interests and the need to rise to the challenge of fulfilling them should always be given priority.

Today, when we present diplomas to all of you, the graduates of class 2014/2015, and when we welcome the future attendees, I call on you, passionately and well-intentionally, to look at the Diplomatic Academy not only as a place where you will be shown the ropes and make the first steps in your diplomatic training and development, but as a stepping stone for attaining self-confidence to face the incoming challenges.

Furthermore, I recommend that you develop an interest in international developments, both current and those vital in historical terms, to keep abreast, on a daily basis, of how things evolve at the international stage and reflect upon possible implications of the diplomatic messages heard in important forums.

It is essential that you embrace the commitment to high-quality education that is sorely needed by Serbian diplomacy, as a guiding principle valid throughout your career. To name an example, how would one, having no required knowledge, explain to a foreign diplomat the reasons behind Serbia's wholehearted effort to reject "Kosovo's" request to join UNESCO? All the more so if unfounded legal arguments and the attempts to falsify history come from the other side? Serbia's foreign policy is entirely dedicated to the dialogue as a means to resolve problems. In order to be able to subscribe to the values that the contemporary civilization is guided by in words, it is necessary to counter unilateralism and distortion of facts, and it is critical to produce and shape an as well-qualified interlocutor as possible.

To conclude, allow me to extend my heartiest congratulations to the graduates of class 2014/2015, who successfully completed the Basic Diplomatic Training Programme, and to welcome the new generation of attendees. I would like to commend in particular two lady attendees with the highest mean grades - Ms. Jelena Jokovic from the Government of the Republic of Serbia and Ms. Irena Kuznik from the Serbian Ministry of Foreign Affairs. I wish all the graduates every success in their future work! May the knowledge and friendships you attained and forged at the Diplomatic Academy be renewed and develop further, to the benefit of the Republic of Serbia, your institutions, and your own."