



First Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Serbia Ivica Dacic gave today a keynote lecture to the new generation of students of the Diplomatic Academy, class 2014/2015, in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Serbia.

The Serbian Foreign Minister wished a successful start of the courses to the students of the Diplomatic Academy and emphasized that this stage of their professional development was just a step forward on the long path of gaining experience. Minister Dacic pointed out that this government has a historic opportunity to make up for all political opportunities missed thus far, stressing that in the future, Serbia will increasingly require diplomatic professionals who will know and be able to preserve, protect and represent the interests of the state.

“Dear future colleagues,

Let me first welcome you and wish you success in this training programme. Not just because of you, and your careers, but, primarily, because of the fact that Serbia will, in a divided and turbulent world, more and more need people, diplomats, who will know and be able to preserve, protect and represent its interests. Personally, I think that diplomacy in Serbia, is an occupation of tomorrow. We are a small country, situated on a peninsula which has been unstable for centuries, surrounded by big powers and their alliances, dependent primarily economically upon the world - in other words, the shape and the future of Serbia will depend only on our, and tomorrow on your wisdom, first in its progress towards the European Union, and then in the Union itself, already divided into large and small, and much ruffled, often rightly, with this part of the continent.

Therefore, today I will not talk about the origins of diplomacy, at the time of the Greek polis, nor about its ad hoc application in Roman times, its blossoming during the renaissance period in Italy, and the first Ministry of Foreign Affairs established by Cardinal Richelieu, in France, in 1626. I am not even going to talk about the first Serbian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, as part of the Prince's Office, which had twelve staff members in the mid-nineteenth century. Your lecturers will talk about it, and my duty is, first and foremost, to tell you what your country expects from you.

And please, right at the beginning, bear in mind the fact that your occupation, and its name, is derived from the Greek word “diploma”, which, in literal translation, means “folded in half”. And think about it, no matter how funny it looks at the moment; because your country is rightly expecting it of you; to know how to bend, and to know how to stand up straight. And to know when and why one thing, or the other, has to be done. And, more importantly, to be ready for all that, regardless of the personal price you have to pay.

You are about to become representatives of Serbia. It means nothing else but to give your all to Serbia. Your own freedom will no longer be yours, it will be the freedom of Serbia. Your justice will be the justice of Serbia. Your comfort, your luxury, can be just the comfort and luxury of Serbia. Each of your profits is the profit of Serbia alone.

So, dear friends, if you are ready for all of that, if you are willing to take the load and bend over backwards for your country, if you can leave your self-interest outside this building, and care only for the interests of Serbia - if so, I will be the first to welcome you, in a few months, to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Serbia.

Right now, I am going to show you in action what all this is about.

I will give you an insight into the issues of the region, where the former brothers cannot seem to become good neighbours; I will get you into the work on European integration processes, where there are, and will be for a long time, much more sticks than carrots; you are going to run from one side of the divided world to another; you will have to be visible, and acceptable, to the United States, Russia, China, the Arab world and Israel.

You will have to bend your neck all day and stand up straight, and all of it for your country. No breaks, no holidays or weekends.

We, who are small, in order to be able to survive and progress have no time to sleep. We, on whose skills the future of this country hinges, can have time only for those skills.

Because of it you are here and will go out into the wide world tomorrow. And remember, the greatest part of that world, will not welcome you as old friends. They will ask everything of you and insist on their interests and their stories, they will hug you in order to strangle you, tap you in order to hurt you.

You will have only one answer to all that – everything can be given away except for Serbia. Serbia is not for giving.

After all, if I have not told you yet, from the moment you become diplomats, Serbia is no longer yours. It is you who belong to it. Forever.

But, at the same time, you are those who can make its name glorious today. Those who can fight for its respect, its reputation and its honor. You, and you mostly, even when you are bent, can make it stand upright. That will, ultimately, be the only job that you have. Your country and its uprightness.

It is for that job that you are preparing yourselves here in this academy.

And prepare yourselves good.

We are in a hurry, ladies and gentlemen. We are in a hurry to get to Europe, stability, and the great and bright future. Therefore, go and do not stop. Serbia is waiting for you. Give yourselves up to it by becoming diplomats.

Thank you for your attention.”