



First Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Serbia Ivica Dacic hosted today, at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, a New Year's cocktails for heads of diplomatic missions and international organizations, as well as for media directors and editors-in-chief.

On the occasion, Minister Dacic addressed the following words to the invited guests:

"Excellencies,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

The first time we met after my appointment as Serbian Foreign Minister, at the beginning of May last year, I spoke about the foreign policy priorities of the newly established Government of the Republic of Serbia. I spoke about the continuation of the European integration process and the dialogue between Belgrade and Pristina, including the implementation of the agreements reached so far with regard to deepening and strengthening neighbourly relations and overall regional cooperation, including the relations with major actors of European policy and our traditional friends and partners worldwide, and about the activity of our diplomatic service aimed at Serbia's economic recovery and internal reforms.

Our foreign policy priorities will remain unchanged also in 2015.

All political factors in the Republic of Serbia have been working hard to integrate Serbia in the current international cooperation flows, which undoubtedly had a positive impact on the international credibility of Serbia whose activities in the previous period included the following, to name just a few: Serbia hosted, in mid-December, the China – CEEC Summit with the participation of 14 Prime Ministers and 3 Deputy Prime Ministers, as well as the Conference on Western Balkans Economic Governance and Connectivity, held in Belgrade in late October, bringing together regional Ministers of Foreign and Economic Affairs and EU officials.

Serbia's top strategic priority, which enjoys widest possible social and political consensus in the country, continues to be its European Union membership. At the same time, EU is our major trading and investment partner. We see the path towards our membership of the EU as a historic opportunity for modernization and change, to which the Government of the Republic of Serbia is truly committed. We are looking forward to the earliest possible opening of membership negotiations. We are aware of the serious nature of the tasks ahead of us and the need to further pursue reforms in all areas. It is encouraging that the European integration process has demonstrated so far that Serbia has the necessary administrative capacities and that it is capable of adopting and implementing the European *acquis* within a short period of time which, I am confident, has been recognized by our European partners too.

Although EU membership is our highest priority, we wish to develop comprehensive relations and friendly cooperation with all countries in order to contribute to international peace, stability and prosperity that we all need.

Serbia is committed to the development of good-neighbourly relations and cooperation with all

countries in the region, to the effect of strengthening stability and promoting a common European future. We are convinced that only through an open and continued dialogue is it possible to resolve open issues, thus contributing best to the development of a stable, economically interrelated and fully cooperation-oriented.

Considering Serbia's current OSCE chairmanship, 2015 will be a year of challenges and great expectations for the Serbian diplomacy. Serbia will endeavour to affirm itself, also as the OSCE Chair, as a credible partner and contribute, in line with its possibilities, to addressing issues important for the stability and security of the European region and beyond. Through dedicated involvement of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and other Government departments, Serbia will endeavour to make a specific and constructive contribution to the enhancement of all the three OSCE dimensions and to the work of the Organization as a whole, particularly in the context of the on-going crisis in Ukraine which will, as we are aware, dominate the OSCE agenda this year as well.

This is not the first time that Serbia is chairing an international organization, but it is certainly the most complex task it was entrusted with. We will make a maximum effort to ensure that our Chairmanship is transparent and unbiased, and to achieve positive results.

Bearing in mind that we will be marking this year the 40th anniversary of the Final Act of Helsinki, we are ready to join efforts with the other participating States, as well as our Mediterranean and Asian partners, in working towards the reaffirmation of the fundamental principles and goals of the OSCE.

I wish to take this opportunity to thank you for your work and performance in the past year, hopeful that in 2015 we will continue our successful cooperation.

I thank you and wish you all the best in 2015."