



First Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Serbia Ivica Dacic held, at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs today, his first press conference in 2015, where he took stock of January's activities and announced the upcoming activities of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in February.

At the very outset, Minister Dacic underlined that one of the major events in the previous month was the formal assumption of the 2015 OSCE Chairmanship by the Republic of Serbia. On the occasion of assumption of the OSCE Chairmanship in Vienna, on 15 January, Minister Dacic attended in his capacity as the Organization's Chairperson-in-Office the Permanent Council Meeting in Vienna, where he presented the Serbian Chairmanship's priorities.

Speaking about Serbia's OSCE Chairmanship, the Foreign Minister stressed that it came at a very difficult moment in time considering the escalation of the crisis in Ukraine and stated that the top priorities in our work would be to support all efforts aimed at a peaceful solution. Given the deterioration of the situation in eastern Ukraine, Serbia, as the OSCE Chair, held extraordinary meetings of the OSCE Permanent Council, on 20 January and 26 January. The Minister deplored yesterday's unsuccessful negotiations of the Trilateral Contact Group in Minsk and expressed hope for scheduling a new round of peace negotiations at the earliest possible date.

As the OSCE Chair, Foreign Minister Dacic visited the OSCE Mission to Serbia on 29 January 2015. This was the Minister's first visit to an OSCE field mission and he intended to visit during the Serbian Chairmanship as many of the OSCE field operations as possible.

As regards bilateral meetings he had last month, Foreign Minister Dacic underlined the importance of his visit to Italy and the participation in the trilateral meeting of Foreign Ministers of Serbia, Italy and Albania. Minister Dacic hosted Hungarian Minister of Foreign Affairs and Trade Peter Szijjarto during the month of January and announced that a return visit would take place on 10-11 February 2015. Minister Dacic further emphasized as extremely important the opening of the Embassy of the State of Qatar in Serbia.

Minister Dacic also paid a very important visit to Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, where he participated in the Executive Council meeting of the African Union. During the Summit, the Foreign Minister met with the Chairperson of the African Union Commission and other senior AU officials, and had a number of bilateral meetings with the Foreign Ministers of African countries. Dacic particularly drew attention to the fact that he met, at the meeting, with representatives of the AU member States which did not recognize the unilaterally declared independence of Kosovo and Metohija, who stated that their countries would maintain their principled position in the future as well.

Referring to the regular activities of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs related to consular affairs, the

Foreign Minister said that the Decision of the Government of the Republic of Serbia on visa-free entry into Serbia by foreign passport holders having a Schengen visa or a UK or any other visa of an EU Member State or a US visa, has been implemented since 8 November 2014.

Speaking about the activities planned for the coming month, Minister Dacic announced that he would be hosting OSCE High Commissioner on National Minorities Astrid Thors, on 2 February. Among the numerous visits to be made in the coming month, Foreign Minister Dacic singled out his visit to Washington, on 5 February 2015, where he would attend the 63rd National Prayer Breakfast, together with many other world officials.

Minister Dacic further said that he would participate in the UN Security Council meeting devoted to the work of UNMIK, on 6 February 2015. He also underlined the importance of the 51st Munich Security Conference, to be held from 6-8 February, which he would attend together with Prime Minister Aleksandar Vucic. Minister Dacic also stated that the OSCE Troika would meet on the MSC fringes.

Foreign Minister Dacic went on to say that 9 February was an important date on which the political dialogue between Belgrade and Pristina was due to resume in Brussels.

As the OSCE Chairperson-in-Office, Dacic will visit OSCE Missions in Skopje and Podgorica, in February. Minister Dacic underlined that he would participate, in the same capacity, in the UN Security Council meeting of 24 February. The following day, he would attend the hearing before the US Congress Helsinki Committee in Washington DC. In closing his today's press conference, the Serbian Foreign Minister stated that the Serbian Government was working in unison on the identified foreign policy priorities. Therefore, the promotion of its European integration process, maintaining regional stability, preservation of good relations with traditional partners including cooperation with non-EU Member States are goals that the Republic of Serbia wishes to achieve in the future, in order to ensure for itself the best possible position in the international arena.