



First Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Serbia Ivica Dacic held a regular press conference at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, today, highlighting the activities in February and announced the activities coming up in March.

Foreign Minister Dacic started today's press conference by referring to the tragedy of six Serbian workers killed in a fire on the Yamal Peninsula, Russian Federation, and underlined that the Ministry of Foreign Affairs received a Letter Rogatory from the Russian Federation requesting legal assistance, which was forwarded to the Ministry of Justice. He emphasized that the competent authorities of the two countries were making utmost efforts in order that the procedure of identifying the bodies of the killed Serbian nationals be completed as early as possible.

The major activities of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in February were focused on Serbia's OSCE Chairmanship, said Dacic. Acting as the OSCE Chairperson-in-Office, Minister Dacic met in Belgrade, in February, with OSCE High Commissioner for National Minorities Astrid Thors and Special Representative of the German Government for OSCE Chairmanship Gernot Erler. As the OSCE Chairperson-in-Office, Serbian Foreign Minister Dacic participated in the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly's winter meeting in Vienna and met, on the sidelines of the meeting, with OSCE Parliamentary Assembly President Ilkka Kanerva; OSCE Assembly Secretary General Spencer Oliver; Special Representative of the OSCE Chairperson-in-Office in the Trilateral Contact Group Ambassador Heidi Tagliavini; Head of the OSCE Special Monitoring Mission to Ukraine Ertugrul Apakan; Head of the Monitoring Mission at the border crossing points between the Russian Federation and Ukraine Paul Picard, and State Secretary of the German Ministry of Foreign Affairs Markus Ederer.

One of the certainly most important visits paid in the capacity as the OSCE Chairperson-in-Office was the visit to the United States where Foreign Minister Dacic participated in the meeting of the UN Security Council and the hearing before the Helsinki Commission of the US Congress. During his visit to the United States, Minister Dacic met with UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon, Foreign Ministers of Russia and Ukraine, Sergey Lavrov and Pavlo Klimkin, as well as Foreign Minister of China Wang Yi and President of the UN Security Council, Permanent Representative of China Ambassador Liu Jieyi. Minister Dacic underlined the importance of the support of 15 UNSC members to the Serbian OSCE Chairmanship.

Dacic particularly referred to one of the most important meetings during his visit to the United States, the meeting with US Secretary of State John Carry.

At the beginning of the month, Foreign Minister Dacic and the Serbian Prime Minister participated in 51st Munich Security Conference which reviewed the crisis in Ukraine and its implications for global and European security architecture, deterioration of the situation in the Middle East, global refugee crisis, fight against terrorism, cyber security, climatic changes and the ebola virus. On the sidelines of the Conference there was a meeting of the OSCE Troika and the Co-Chairpersons of the "Minsk Group". As the OSCE Chairman-in-Office, together with the other two Troika members, Minister Dacic received the "Ewald von Kleist" award, presented since 2009 for particular contribution to peace and conflict resolution, which has been awarded for the first time to an international organization.

In February, Serbian Foreign Minister also took part in the National Prayer Breakfast in Washington where he met Assistant Secretary of State Victoria Nuland, Congressman Ted Poe and Emanuel Cleaver, Co-Chairs of the Serbian Caucus, as well as with Senator Chris Murphy. As regards bilateral visits, Minister Dacic paid an official visit to Hungary, at the invitation of his colleague Minister of Foreign Affairs and Trade Peter Szijarto.

Referring to regular activities of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Dacic said that the process of installing biometric equipment used for receiving applications for issuance of passports in diplomatic/consular missions of the Republic of Serbia have been continued. Presently, biometric equipment has been installed in 44 embassies and consulates of the Republic of Serbia, and there is a tendency to have them installed in all diplomatic/consular representations with the exception of missions and cultural/information centre.

Regarding the European integration process, Minister Dacic underlined that exploratory and bilateral screenings have been completed for 28 chapters thus far, and that the screening process is expected to be completed by March 2015.

Among the activities planned for March, a visit to Latvia has been announced, which is scheduled for 6-7 March, when MFA Dacic will meet EU foreign policy head Federica Mogherini.

First Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs Dacic also announced a meeting with the Western Balkan 6 ("WB6") in Pristina, but emphasized that neither an official confirmation nor invitation to the meeting have been received.

In capacity as OSCE Chairman-in-Office, Minister Dacic will open the Conference on the Protection of Security and Integrity of Journalists in the OSCE Region, to be held in Belgrade, on 26 March 2015. Moreover, this Conference is the first meeting organized by Serbia as the OSCE Chair.

At the invitation of Croatian Minister of Foreign and European Affairs Vesna Pusic, MFA Dacic will pay an official visit to Croatia, on 11 March 2015.

Furthermore, among foreign official up-coming visits to Belgrade, the visit of the Minister of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation of Italy, Paolo Gentiloni, is expected on 31 March. Minister Dacic will visit, together with Defence Minister Bratislav Gasic, NATO Headquarters in Brussels, on 18 March, where he will meet with NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg. This visit was agreed following the adoption of the Individual Partnership Action Plan (IPAP) R. Serbia – NATO by the Serbian Government at its meeting on 20 December 2014; the document was adopted by NATO North Atlantic Council (NAC) on 15 January 2015, thus ending the IPAP adoption procedure. Following the adoption of IPAP, the visit will raise the political dialogue between the Republic of Serbia and NATO to an even higher level.

At the invitation of the Dragan Sormaz, Head of the Permanent Delegation of the National Assembly of the Republic of Serbia to the NATO Parliamentary Assembly, the Serbian Foreign

Minister will address, on 31 March, the participants in the 88th Rose-Rot Seminar of the NATO Parliamentary Assembly in Belgrade, where he will speak about the European integration process of the Republic of Serbia and its OSCE Chairmanship.

At today's press conference, the Foreign Minister also highlighted the importance of the measures of austerity and rationalization of expenses implemented also in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, as a result of which all embassy payments of allowances for hospitality expenses during the visits of Serbian officials to foreign countries were discontinued