



Speech delivered by First Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs Ivica Dacic at a ceremony on the occasion of marking the Serbian Diplomacy Day in the Serbian National Assembly:

“Madam Speaker of the National Assembly,
Deputy Speakers and Heads of Parliamentary Groups,
Distinguished Members of the Government of Serbia,
Mr. Mayor,
Honourable Heads of religious communities,
Your Excellencies,
Dear friends, Ladies and gentlemen,

Alongside the creation of the Serbian state, foundations of our diplomatic service were also laid. From the very first “Serbian kapuchehayas” and “embassies” slowly but steadily and with a lot of effort modern Serbian diplomacy came into being, having today 98 diplomatic missions and consular posts and permanent missions worldwide.

I cannot but fail to mention the Nemanjic dynasty, Mateja Nenadovic, Dimitrije Davidovic, Ilija Garasanin, Laza Kostic, Stojan Novakovic, Jovan Ristic, Vladan Djordjevic, Nikola Pasic, Jovan Ducic who was our first Ambassador, Ivo Andric, Milos Crnjanski, Branislav Nusic, Milan Rakic, Slobodan Jovanovic, Koca Popovic, Marko Nikezic, Momcilo Nincic and Vojislav Marinkovic who used to be Presidents of the League of Nations Council in the interwar period.

The great Ilija Garasanin, who was also the Minister for Foreign Affairs for some time, while writing his famous blueprint envisaged two preconditions for a small country, like Serbia still is, to survive, develop and expand in the rough seas of international relations. The former is, according to him, that it has roots, history and tradition it can draw its inspiration and motivation from. The latter is a long-term project seeing the state not only in terms of today but of tomorrow and many, many years later as well.

The same reasons have prompted us as the Government of Serbia to establish Serbian Diplomacy Day. We simply want to remind us and the others that Serbia has its roots and a long-term project, strategy and tools leading it into the future.

We have carefully chosen this date, knowing that the Principality's First Foreign Service Office was established under Milos Obrenovic, a ruler who, despite being illiterate himself, had a clear vision of Serbia, primarily in Europe, gradually breaking off the shackles of Ottoman occupation.

I believe that the message is more than clear enough. Today's Serbia, the Serbia of reforms and European path, is forging ties and looks for its roots in the Serbia of the nineteenth century, which tried first to find Europe within itself.

Ilija Garasanin, our first politician with a plan, is part of that Serbia, as well as many other statesmen and diplomats who saw the future of the country, torn between several great powers at the time, the way we see it even today: a modern, European, successful, developed and economically strong country.

This is Serbia that can no longer afford romantic dreams of being "the East in the West and the West in the East", nor can it allow any adventurism of the sort we watched so many times in our own history.

This is Serbia with a clearly defined place in the world, a European state, appreciated and respected, credible enough to be able to maintain, in its own interests, the kind of relations with the rest of the world that will bring lasting peace and prosperity to it.

This is Serbia which will be big enough to be respected by all and feared by no-one.

Serbia, as the mainstay of the entire region, its base and foothold, as an ally and maker of a policy ruling out conflict as a method of dealing with any problems, and instead conducting, on a continuous basis, a dialogue not implying ready-made solutions but seeking them by respecting everyone's interests.

This is ultimately the Serbia which no longer reflects upon or is divided over its place or where to be.

It knows it and is determined to have its place also in Europe, like it has it in Serbia itself.

Europe is the ultimate goal of Serbian policy and our diplomacy, and the end result of all actions that the incumbent coalition Government has taken over the past few years.

These actions, you will agree, were often revolutionary like our first visit to Brussel to meet with Kosovo Albanians or like our economic reforms initiated, but they were, at the same time, part of that main plan, the one that did not deal with us or our political future but solely with Serbia's future.

The one that will be in Europe and the one having Europe within.

The one that will not have to beg anyone for anything, but will know to create, build, explore and earn itself.

An equitable and respected member of the community where it geographically and

civilizationally belongs. A country which solves rather than creates problems.

For all these reasons we celebrate today. For the sake of Serbia's future.

For the sake of such a future, we are taking pride in our roots today. I would like to commend the former and incoming Ministers for their respect for the job they are doing. For the sake of our future we are having a plan today.

You who have joined us today are part of that plan as our friends and partners.

In line with its foreign policy priorities, Serbian diplomacy together with the other governmental authorities, is actively and directly engaged in safeguarding the country's national interests, resumption of accession negotiations with the European Union, maintenance of good cooperation with key partners at the international stage, development of good-neighbourly relations, building of a modern and stable Serbia, preservation of international peace and the respect of international law.

Our aim is a strong and respected Serbia with a changed international status. Our aim is the new branding for Serbia and having it taken off the agenda of international fora and instead being a factor of resolving problems.

The achievement of all these objectives will not be possible without a modern and professional diplomatic service. Therefore, reform of diplomacy is a necessity, implying also enactment of a new Foreign Affairs Act.

Let me remember today those who gave their lives in the diplomatic service. Dr Djordje Lopacic listed 84 diplomats and employees who were killed while performing their duties in the post-WWII period, beginning with the brutal murder of Ambassador to Sweden, Vladimir Rolovic.

In the end, let me recall the words of Lord Salisbury, former British Foreign Secretary, who told Serbian Minister Cedomilj Mijatovic:

"I do assure you, dear Minister, that Serbia enjoys our support. It will enjoy it also in the future, provided we do not have to wage a war for you and we do not have to lend you money".

And see how things have changes after a hundred years and so.

Today, Serbia's primary aim is not to have to go to war for or to borrow money from anyone.

And it can be said that we are well on the track to achieve both of these goals.

Thank you for your attention and let me once again congratulate Serbian Diplomacy Day to all our diplomats and employees of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

Thank you"