



First Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Serbia Ivica Dacic held, at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs today, a regular monthly press conference, summing up the activities of the previous month and announcing the forthcoming activities of the Foreign Ministry.

Minister Dacic stated that in May, the activities of this institution focused mostly on bilateral and regional cooperation, as well as on Serbia's OSCE Chairmanship. Efforts aimed at opening negotiations on chapters related to Serbia's EU membership are regularly the priority in the work of the institution.

In the context of Serbia's top foreign policy priority, joining the EU, of major importance was the "Friends of Serbia" Meeting, held in Brussels, on 18 May, at the initiative of Austria and Italy, on the sidelines of the EU Foreign Affairs Council. The Serbian delegation, headed by Prime Minister Vucic, called for the earliest possible opening of chapters in the EU accession process. It was an important meeting, although a specific date has not been set for opening negotiation chapters, as this does not depend on the willingness of Serbia, but on its EU friends. Serbia has done as much as it could and will continue to pursue the policy ensuring a better future for the Serbian people and we hope that the EU will be able to recognize and respect this. The Meeting affirmed that Serbia was the key factor of stability in the Western Balkan region. All participants in the meeting, including Foreign Minister of Germany Steinmeier, agreed that the first chapters should be opened as early as the beginning of Luxembourg's EU Presidency.

It was particularly in view of its assumption of EU Presidency, but also with the aim of enhancing the bilateral cooperation and political dialogue that Minister Dacic paid an official visit to the Grand Duchy of Luxembourg, in early May. He was hosted by Foreign Minister Jean Asselborn, who took the opportunity to convey to him that one of the priorities of the Luxembourg EU Presidency was opening of the first chapters in the negotiations with the Republic of Serbia.

The most important visit to Belgrade was certainly the visit by Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov (15 May), since the talks were focused on bilateral issues, as well as around the Serbian OSCE Chairmanship.

The Serbian Foreign Minister addressed, on 26 May, the UN Security Council meeting at which the report of UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon was presented, and spoke about the work of UNMIK. Minister Dacic took the opportunity to thank members of the Security Council for continuing to devote their attention to the issue, extremely important to the Republic of Serbia,

Kosovo and Metohija.

In the previous month, Foreign Minister Dacic continued his regular telephone contacts with Foreign Ministers of Germany, Frank-Walter Steinmeier, of Switzerland Didier Burkhalter, of Ukraine Pavo Klimkin and of Russia, Sergey Lavrov.

The most important visit in the month of June was the visit to the South Caucasus, i.e. Azerbaijan, Georgia and Armenia. Minister Dacic travelled to these countries as OSCE Chairman-in-Office, but part of the visit was devoted to bilateral issues, as well.

In June, Foreign Minister Dacic met Foreign Minister of Palestine Riyad al Maliki, during the official visit of President Mahmoud Abbas to Serbia.

Minister Dacic attended the meeting of the African Union Executive Council, from 11-12 June, bringing together Ministers of Foreign Affairs of African countries and partner countries to discuss security issues in the African continent, including ways of resolving current focal points of crisis, economic development and cooperation between AU member states.

During the Summit, Minister Dacic met with senior officials of the AU Commission and had a number of bilateral meetings with Foreign Ministers of African countries with whom he exchanged views on possible promotion of bilateral relations and raising the level of political dialogue, and particularly the promotion of economic and military/economic cooperation which was formerly assessed to have significant potentials in the mutual interest.

Minister Dacic had separate meetings with the Ambassadors of Quinta, as well as with the Ambassadors of EU Member States, in the context of regular exchanges on the current international issues and political developments.

In conclusion, Minister Dacic referred to the highly important aspect of work of the Foreign Ministry – consular issues. Further liberalization of Serbia's no visa requirement policy has continued. Holders of ordinary passports from 65 countries may enter and stay in Serbia without a visa, whereas nationals of 129 countries continue to be subject to the visa requirement. The implementation of the Decision of the Serbian Government enabling entry without a visa to holders of foreign passports who have a Schengen visa, UK visa, visas of other EU member states or a US visa, has already rendered positive results, reflected on the monthly basis in a recorded increase in the number of entries by some 800 foreign nationals and business people for tourism purposes. The trend continues and most of the entries were by nationals of China, India, Georgia and Azerbaijan.

A Conference of Honorary Consuls of the Republic of Serbia was held yesterday at the Serbia Palace, who were addressed, in addition to the Foreign Minister, also by the Prime Minister of Serbia, Aleksandar Vucic. Out of 72 honorary consuls representing the Republic of Serbia throughout the world, the Conference was attended by 38 of them, as the most influential economic and political figures in their own communities. The main theme of the Conference was intensifying the activities of honorary consuls in the implementation of the policy and the interests of the Republic of Serbia in international relations and their support of Serbia's exports and attraction of foreign investments. This was a unique opportunity for Serbia's honorary consuls to air their observations and proposals on how to promote and affirm inter-state relations, as well as the economic, cultural and scientific cooperation between the Republic of Serbia and the states where its honorary consuls are discharging their duties.

Minister Dacic announced that, before the end of the month, as early as Monday, 15 June, he would participate in the Annual Meeting of Foreign Ministers of the Central European Initiative (CEI), in Ohrid. During the Meeting, in line with the existing practice, the Ministers will adopt a joint statement on the most pressing political issues in the CEI region, as well as the most

important aspects of work of the Initiative.

On 16 and 17 June, in Vienna, as OSCE Chairman-in-Office, Dacic will attend the Meeting of the Core Group of the Munich Security Conference, at the invitation of its Chairman Ischinger, which will be organized by the Austrian Government and the OSCE. Before this Meeting, also on 16 June, Dacic will address the OSCE Conference on the security of journalists, freedom of the media and pluralism in time of armed conflict.

On 18-20 June Minister Dacic will participate in the St. Petersburg Economic Forum, at the invitation of Deputy Prime Minister of the Russian Federation, Sergey Lavrov.

For 22-24 June, a visit to Serbia by Vice Premier of China Zhang Gaoli has been scheduled.

On 23 June, dialogue with Pristina, in Brussels, will be resumed.

On 26 June, Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Hellenic Republic Nikos Kotzias will visit Belgrade. This will be the first visit by Greek officials following the installation of their new Government which, in addition to consolidating already good bilateral relations, will also be in the function of preparing the visit of Greek Prime Minister Alexis Tsipras.

On 27 June, Chairperson of the African Union Commission Nkosazana Dlamini-Zuma will visit Belgrade.

On 29-30 June, Minister Dacic announced that he would participate in the meeting of the stakeholders and the Steering Committee of the Regional Housing Programme (RHP) in Podgorica, as Chairman of the National RHP Steering Committee.

On 30 June, the Serbian Foreign Minister announced his participation in the Friends of Europe event. The Joint Session of the Governments of Serbia and Hungary is expected to be held already on 1 July.