

SERBIA**DACIC AND AMBASSADOR OF BRAZIL CONFIRM INTEREST IN CONTINUING COOPERATION**

BELGRADE, 16 January 2019 (Beta) - Serbian Foreign Minister Ivica Dacic on Jan. 16 thanked the outgoing Brazilian ambassador, Isabel Cristina de Azevedo Heyvaert, for her active engagement and contribution to the development of the traditionally friendly relations between Serbia and Brazil. According to the statement of the Serbian Foreign Ministry, it was confirmed during the meeting that Serbia wanted to continue to develop its cooperation with Brazil, one of the key political and economic partners in the region of Latin America, in all fields of mutual interest. Ambassador De Azevedo stressed the significance of improving the contractual basis through completing the work on harmonizing bilateral agreements which are in procedure, and the potentials for developing cooperation in the economic domain. Dacic thanked Brazil for its support to the territorial integrity and sovereignty of Serbia, stressing that Serbia was ready to continue to closely cooperate with the new government of Brazil.

DACIC TALKS WITH ALLIED JOINT FORCE COMMAND NAPLES CHIEF-OF-STAFF

BELGRADE, 16 January 2019 (Beta) - Foreign Minister Ivica Dacic and Luciano Portolano, Chief-of-Staff of the Allied Joint Force Command Naples, have said they were happy with intense political dialogue between Serbia and NATO and successful defense and civil cooperation with respect for Serbia's neutrality. They discussed possibilities for enhancing the partnership and cooperation, considering that Serbia and NATO are bound by the common interest of preserving peace and stability in the region, according to a release from the Serbian Foreign Ministry. Dacic said that starting from the fact that the past could not be altered, including the 1999 events, but that the future could be influenced, it was important for Serbia and NATO to deepen cooperation considering their common interest of preserving peace and stability in the region. Portolano said that Serbia was one of NATO's best partners and the crucial factor for regional stability, noting that NATO had been investing special effort to further improve the quality and quantity of joint activities realized for the purpose of strengthening security and stability in the region. Serbia participates in numerous international missions and operations under the auspices of the EU and the U.N. and is ready for cooperation with NATO in combating terrorism, response in emergency situations and facing current security risks, according to the release. Dacic and Portolano, also serving as head of the EU Command Element, positively assessed cooperation in the field between the Serbian Army and KFOR for the purpose of implementing U.N. Security Council Resolution 1244 and the Military Technical Agreement. Dacic stressed that the unreduced presence of KFOR was very important for ensuring safety and preserving Serbia's cultural and religious heritage in Kosovo and Metohija.

BRNABIC WITH HEAD OF ITALIAN ANTI-CORRUPTION AGENCY

BELGRADE, 16 January 2019 (Beta) - Serbian Prime Minister Ana Brnabic stated on Jan. 16 that the fight against corruption was important and one of the priorities in the process of reforms which Serbia is carrying out on the path to EU membership. According to the statement from the office of the Serbian prime minister, she met with the head of the National Anti-Corruption

Agency of Italy, Rafael Cantone, on Jan. 16 and discussed the successful completion of the twinning project "Prevention and Fight against Corruption", realized in cooperation with Italian partners. Brnabic expressed her thanks for the Italian agency's assistance and stated that she appreciated Italy's support in the fight against corruption. Cantone said he was pleased with cooperation with the Anti-Corruption Agency and with the results of that project, adding that Italy would continue to closely cooperate with and support Serbia at all levels, especially in that field.

KUBUROVIC: PUBLIC DEBATE ON DRAFT ANTI-CORRUPTION LAW TO START SOON

BELGRADE, 16 January 2019 (Beta) - Justice Minister Nela Kuburovic announced on Jan. 16 that the public debate about the new draft law on the prevention of corruption, which is the new name for the Law on the Anti-Corruption Agency, would start soon. She made the announcement during a meeting with the head of the National Agency for the Fight against Corruption of the Republic of Italy, Rafael Cantone. Kuburovic said the Serbian Justice Ministry dedicated equal attention to the strengthening of repressive and preventive anti-corruption mechanisms, reads the statement of the ministry. She pointed out that the new law had been harmonized with recommendations of GRECO experts and that its goal was to expand the jurisdiction and strengthen the Agency's independence. During the meeting, Kuburovic and Cantone stressed that Serbia and Italy had excellent cooperation in the judiciary, and that it was the most intensive in the fight against corruption and organized crime. Kuburovic recollected that the Italian and Serbian justice ministers signed the cooperation agreement in 2017, which improved the exchange of information between Serbia and Italy in the fight against crime and corruption. She added that, not long after that, a memorandum was signed with Italy's financial police, on the basis of which Serbian prosecutors and police officers began attending courses in Italy in 2018, on the fight against corruption and financial crime.

EU AMBASSADORS: SERBIA MUST ADOPT ANTI-CORRUPTION LAW AS SOON AS POSSIBLE

BELGRADE, 16 January 2019 (Beta) - The chief of the EU Delegation in Serbia, Sem Fabrizi, and the Italian and Spanish ambassadors to Serbia, Carlo lo Cascio and Miguel Fuertes Suarez, urged the authorities in Belgrade on Jan. 16 to adopt the new anti-corruption law as soon as possible, while the Serbian minister for European integration, Jadranka Joksimovic, stated that it was "never too late for such an important law." Fabrizi said Serbia should provide for efficient institutions for the implementation and monitoring of measures in the fight against corruption, and that the new law should additionally strengthen the Anti-Corruption Agency and enable its better connection with other state bodies, especially with the prosecution. There have been serious delays in the adoption of the new law and we must now push matters a little bit. I am urging the Justice Ministry to finish the draft as soon as possible, in accordance with the recommendation of GRECO and with the Action Plan for Chapters 23 and 24, so that it can be adopted in the parliament, Fabrizi said at a gathering to mark the completion of the twinning project "Prevention and Fight against Corruption" which lasted for 30 months and which the EU financed. Fabrizi also said that Serbia should provide proof of enforcement of the law and that the final indicator of success would be the number of convictions for corruption. Political will is a precondition for such results, but one also has to have courage for the fight against corruption, Fabrizi stated. The minister in charge of European integration, Jadranka Joksimovic, stated that

the political will for the fight against corruption existed in Serbia and that the authorities were proving every day that it was on the list of their priorities. "You know there has been talk about delays in the implementation of the Action Plan 23 and 24 and that is true - there have been delays because we were guided by the principle of 'quality before speed', but it can never be too late for such a law," Joksimovic said at the gathering. She stated that this was a systemic law, which has been sent to GRECO (the Group of States against Corruption, a body of the Council of Europe) to declare their opinion on it.

DJORDJEVIC DISCUSSES LIGHTING AT CEMETERY AND TEMPLE WITH RUSSIAN FIRM

BELGRADE, 16 January 2019 (Beta) - The Serbian minister for labor and veterans' issues, Zoran Djordjevic, met with representatives of the Russian company Boss Lighting Group and discussed the reconstruction and lighting of the Cemetery of the Liberators of Belgrade and lighting of the Church of St. Sava and of the entire plateau around the church, the Ministry for Labor, Employment, Veterans' and Welfare Issues stated on Jan. 16. Djordjevic pointed out that war memorials were built to honor the heroes who gave their lives for their country and the freedom of future generations, and that they deserved the memory of them to be cherished with dignity. "War memorials are historically and culturally important for our two nations. The Serbs and the Russians always fought on the same side and the proof of that is 180 years of good diplomatic relations and the frequent meetings of presidents Aleksandar Vucic and Vladimir Putin," Djordjevic said, stressing that Putin's visit represented a great honor for Serbia. The president of the Russian company, Georgy Valentinovic, thanked Minister Djordjevic for receiving him, adding that he was pleased to be able to cooperate with Serbia in the field that is very important for the two countries.

ECONOMY

PM: SERBIA HAS POLITICAL GUARANTEES IT WON'T BE HIT BY EU QUOTAS ON STEEL IMPORT

BELGRADE, 16 January 2019 (Beta) - Prime Minister Ana Brnabic said on Jan. 16 that Serbia had political guarantees that it would not be affected by the introduction of quotas for imports of steel in the EU countries, so Serbia's economy and steel manufacturer in Smederevo, owned by the HBIS Group were safe at the moment. "We have political guarantees that Serbia will not be affected by the quotas. It is part of the Stabilization and Association Agreement with the EU," she told reporters in Belgrade. She specified that of three relevant categories in steel production subject to quotas, Serbia would have quotas for the first category, but only a global quota for the EU, while it would probably have quotas for the other two categories, but with the possibility to automatically increase them. Brnabic said that the EU steel quotas would take effect on Feb. 4, while Serbia would be able to increase them and join the global quota as of April. "We have also agreed a clause envisaging that at all times we can express concern for our production. If we evidence that with data, we can have additional negotiations on increasing quotas," she said. Brnabic stressed that the EU restrictions on imports of steel were not directed against Serbia and the Western Balkans or China, noting that the measures had been imposed. The U.S., she said, was the first to introduce safeguard measures on the EU steel market, which was most sensitive for the EU as steel production was something the EU had been founded on, so the EU

had to introduce counter measures. Brnabic noted that the government had discussed steel quotas with the EU for more than four months.

SERBIAN, RUSSIAN MINISTERS TO MEET IN FEBRUARY TO DISCUSS NEW AGREEMENT ON PHYTO-SANITARY PROTECTION

BELGRADE, 16 January 2019 (Beta) - Serbian Minister for Agriculture Branislav Nedimovic announced on Jan. 16 that he would meet with the Russian minister for agriculture in Russia on Feb. 11 or 12, to discuss the new agreement on phyto-sanitary protection. He added that the state was contending with everyone in Serbia who re-exports agricultural products to Russia. "Serbia exports more than 200,000 tons of apples to Russia annually, and the value of those apples is two or three times greater than when we export them to the EU," Nedimovic told reporters, adding that he was constantly in contact with the relevant Russian commission. He stressed that Serbia was creating great difficulties for all those who try to re-export goods and that more than 60 persons were arrested in one month at the end of last year.