The task of diplomacy is to follow, promote and maintain international relations, to eliminate and settle misunderstandings and problems which have arisen in relations between subjects of international law and international relations in general.

Like any organization or society which has to function according to certain rules, the same is true of relations between states where it is necessary to ensure that their contacts and cooperation are in accordance with a number of universally accepted rules and customs, and within the framework of pre-planned arrangements. In the course of its development, diplomacy has elaborated special techniques of communication and conduct, applying various forms and methods which have, over time, become standard norms of behaviour of diplomats. These rules have changed, been upgraded and improved with new knowledge and customs, and have become generally accepted, thus forming an international diplomatic protocol. Therefore, diplomatic protocol is the sum of rules of conduct of official representatives of states and international organizations in the exercise of diplomatic functions in international relations. These rules are embodied in the Vienna Convention on Diplomatic Relations (VCDR), the Vienna Convention on Consular Relations (VCCR), the Convention on Special Missions, the Convention on the Privileges and Immunities of the United Nations and its Specialized Agencies, and in multilateral and bilateral treaties.

However, in a part of diplomatic ceremonial, many issues related to precedents and privileges have not been regulated by international norms, but rather have been left to be governed by rules of international customary law or norms of national legislation, tradition and customs of states.

Our diplomatic protocol is, of course, based on the same principles and norms of international law as applied by other states and international organizations. Yugoslavia, now the Republic of Serbia, is a party to all international treaties and conventions, and its legislation has been brought in line with its international legal obligations.

DIPLOMATIC PROTOCOL SERVICE

As a rule, the Diplomatic Protocol Service is always placed within the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. It makes sure that all diplomatic representatives receive proper treatment and that they are accorded, under domestic regulations and practice, prerogatives, immunities and privileges to which they are entitled, including an unimpeded performance of their functions and those of their missions, in the interest of successful development of international relations.

The Protocol Service and its *Ceremonial Section* coordinate and implement the programme of international visits; provides appropriate formal treatment during international visits, meetings and international negotiations, signing of international agreements; and make sure that precedence between foreign countries and their representatives is maintained by respecting the principle of equality; it organizes the presence of the diplomatic and consular corps at state ceremonies and ceremonial events.

The Diplomatic Protocol plans, coordinates, organizes and performs other duties related to the formal accreditation of foreign Ambassadors in the Republic of Serbia (it coordinates and

organizes the ceremony of the presentation of Letters of Credence) and Serbian Ambassadors in foreign countries (preparation of Letters of Recall and Credence).

The Diplomatic Protocol publishes the diplomatic list and the order of precedence.

The Vienna Conventions have facilitated the solution of protocol related issues since they have established rules, prerogatives, privileges and immunities accorded to diplomatic representatives. Adherence or non-adherence to these norms, for instance, ceremonial related to international visits, often indicates the state of relations between the countries concerned. However, the two Conventions do not prevent either higher or better treatment than the one accorded thereunder.

Protocol is also engineering or the service that should coordinate the functioning of all logistical segments; to ensure desired publicity and high profile of certain segments of ceremonial events or to secure privacy and discretion. Protocol is also obliged to ensure a greater or lesser visibility of the police and arrangements for the security of guests, and perfect functioning of all services. Protocol creates a product that is not a mechanical sum, but a reflection of the objective interests of a country, of the subjective wishes of the guest and the host and, of course, of the real possibilities.

The tasks of the Diplomatic Protocol are usually carried out by a certain number of organizational units,such as:

- Privileges and Immunities, including in some countries separate or
- within the same unit, specialized Legal Status Service;
- Ceremonial and State Visits;
- Formal Correspondence.

Within the Protocol, there is sometimes a separate service dealing with the coordination of security and physical protection of foreign diplomatic and consular missions, diplomats and VIP guests.

In some countries, diplomatic/state protocol includes even today (or semi-independent of it) specialized companies (services) for rendering services to the Diplomatic Corps such as residential lettings and properties; lease contracting; maintenance services; security services; recruitment of servant staff; hiring of local technical staff (interpreters, Personal Assistants and others). However, in most countries all these services or almost all of them are left to the market.

DIPLOMATIC AND CONSULAR MISSIONS AND PROTOCOL IN THE RECEIVING STATE

Diplomatic agents and members of their families enjoy, in the receiving state, privileges and immunities accorded to them under international law and the legislation of the receiving state. At the same time, they are all bound to respect the laws and administrative regulations, as well as

the tradition and customs of the receiving state, and they should refrain from any acts “which might be construed as interfering in the internal affairs of the receiving state”.

Protocol also means the initial contact with the officials of the receiving state. Protocol is the one that grants the diplomatic and consular missions and their staff appropriate treatment and prerogatives granted to them under the VCDR, VCCR and the domestic regulations and practices; it also accords them the immunities and privileges they are entitled to, as well as ensures an unimpeded exercise of their functions. Therefore, the common rule is that “a good relationship should be maintained with the Protocol”. All members of the staff play a role in it. Their duty is to grasp, as soon as possible, the structure and machinery of the operation of services in the receiving state, including people who perform these jobs (Protocol, police, airport, customs services, etc.). Account should be taken of small courtesy gestures for Christmas, New Year, invitations to cocktail, receptions or functions, tea/coffee parties. Anything that does not look or sound like bribe and has an appropriate measure may be taken into consideration in this respect.

PRECEDENCE

Protocol, among other things, implies also a procedure according to which participants in a certain ceremonial event are given proper places under the arrangements made for that occasion, in accordance with their rank, title or position, or prerogatives belonging to every participant according to the objective opinion of a community or a state. This means that a particular person, because of his/her position, is considered more important than others and treated accordingly. Precedence is the order made according to rank or the entitlement of a person to a place or honours in relation to other persons participating in an official or ceremonial event. In practice, a distinction is made between precedence according to entitlement according to privileges and precedence based on courtesy. Observing precedence is extremely important during official and sometimes even during private functions. An error of procedure in protocol may lead to a disharmony of the ceremonial function as a whole.

ORDER OF PRECEDENCE

Precedence is the order of state and social positions according to which the holders of these positions are placed on ceremonial occasions. The established precedence is formulated into a list containing the order of precedence. In almost every society this list is occasionally drawn up and changed and adapted to the new realities, from time to time. This list is also made for their own needs by companies, institutions, municipalities, regions, provinces, state institutions and, of course, by the state.

Precedence may be of an official or internal nature. Precedence and the level of its obligatory character depend also on the nature of a ceremonial event, namely, whether it is international, domestic with a foreign element or domestic/internal.

Errors made with respect to precedence are very grave indeed, if made by a protocol officer. The established and accepted order of precedence is a point of departure for any involvement of the Protocol, from organizing the order of arrivals and departures, seating arrangements, to

introduction of distinguished guests. In many countries, failure to recognize or honour the appropriate rank and order of precedence of a guest is equal to an insult to his position and the country he/she represents. That was the reason why even wars were unleashed in the past.

DIPLOMATIC PRECEDENCE

The Protocol of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs looks after the order of precedence of permanent or temporary heads of missions, according to the dates and time of the presentation of their Letters of Credence, their Commission or Letters of Introduction, or of their assumption of duties. The precedence list is only for official purposes and not for private occasions.

NATIONAL (STATE) PRECEDENCE AND THE DIPLOMATIC CORPS IN THE RECEIVING STATE

Bearing in mind the general criteria and practices in other countries, Ambassadors accredited in Serbia should be placed or seated after the Vice Presidents of the National Assembly of the Republic of Serbia and Cabinet Ministers, alternating them with Serbian dignitaries. Charges d'Affaires should be placed or seated after MPs/deputies of the National Assembly. Ministers Plenipotentiary should be placed or seated after State Secretaries.

ORDER OF PRECEDENCE WITHIN THE DIPLOMATIC CORPS

1. Ambassadors Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary and Apostolic Nuncio (the latter is always the Dean of the Diplomatic Corps in catholic countries);
2. Ministers Plenipotentiary;
3. Charges d'Affaires ad hoc or pro tempore
4. Charges d'Affaires ad interim (Embassies);
5. Charge d'Affaires ad interim (Legations).

Heads of Mission and Ministers Plenipotentiary are ranked among themselves according to the date and time of the presentation of their Letters (or the date of arrival and presentation of copies of the Letters).

Heads of Mission of higher class are more senior in rank than heads of mission of the class that follows.

Charges d'Affaires ad interim are ranked according to the most recent date of assumption of duties (their personal rank is not taken into account).

Precedence among diplomatic agents of various missions having the same title is made according to the class of their head of mission.

Charges d'Affaires ad interim are placed or seated after permanent heads of mission and before all other diplomats.

In countries where international organizations are based and in which member states of these organizations and other states have permanently accredited representatives (e.g. Belgium), Ambassadors accredited to the Head of State have precedence over permanent representatives of the same rank accredited to the EU, NATO and WEU.

Precedence among Ambassadors/Permanent Representatives to international organizations is made annually.

Non-resident Ambassadors accredited in the receiving state are placed or seated after all resident Heads of Mission of the same rank and before Ambassadors not accredited in that country (on a visit).

Special Envoy/Shuttle Ambassador precedes an Ambassador permanently accredited in that country. A permanently accredited Ambassador, who has been designated as Head or a member of a special mission, comes immediately after Heads of special missions and before all other accredited Ambassadors in the receiving state.

ORDER OF PRECEDENCE WITHIN THE CONSULAR CORPS

Order of precedence within the Consular Corps is as follows:

1. Consul General;
2. Consul;
3. Vice Consul;
4. Consular Agent.

ORDER OF PRECEDENCE WITHIN THE DIPLOMATIC AND CONSULAR MISSIONS

Order of precedence within the diplomatic and consular missions is as follows:

1. Minister Counsellor;
2. Counsellor;
3. Defence Attache (Army, Naval, Air Attache) according to military rank;
4. First Secretary;
5. Second Secretary;
6. Third Secretary;
7. Attache.

DUTIES AND TASKS PERFORMED BY THE PROTOCOL SERVICE

VISITS BY FOREIGN REPRESENTATIVES (requesting and accepting of visits)

Foreign representatives (delegations and individuals) request meetings with official representatives of state institutions, as a rule, through their diplomatic and consular missions in Serbia (Embassy in Belgrade, mission of an international organization, consular offices in other cities). Such meetings may also be initiated through Serbian diplomatic and consular missions abroad, which report to the relevant institutions in the country via the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Requests are made to the Protocol of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Office of the President of the National Assembly or the Government or other officials in individual ministries and Government departments.

The decision whether a foreign representative or delegation should be received and by whom, is taken on the basis of:

- Nature and level of development of relations and cooperation with the country or organization concerned;
- The country's interest in the further promotion of these relations;
- Personality of the foreign counterpart concerned, his position and functions, as well as possible impact on decision-making in his country or organization;
- The fact that, in seeking to ensure reception at the highest possible level, foreign representatives and their missions sometimes tend to lose the perception of reality.

Protocol procedures

Eminent foreign personalities, representatives of foreign governments and senior officials of international organizations like the United Nations, OSCE, Council of Europe and the European Union, as well as other distinguished guests, are entitled to appropriate type of treatment and honours during the visit, according to their rank or mission they are on, as well as in line with our interests. In order to achieve this, the Protocol Service must be duly notified of their respective visits, names, positions and the hosts on the Serbian side, as well as other possible interlocutors. Also, it is necessary to clearly define what type of visitors should be accorded VIP treatment and give unequivocal instructions as to the arrangement to be made with the hosts and the programme of visit to be agreed.

Tasks of the Protocol Service

The tasks of the Protocol Service are as follows:

- to check the preparations made in the premises intended for the meeting (airing of the room; flower arrangement; appropriate number of seats; technical equipment; sound/recording, etc.);
- to meet and greet the guest(s) at the entrance (at the arranged time);
- to escort the guest(s) to the premises;

- to introduce the guest(s) to the host and other local participants;
- to walk participants to their seats in the office (hall, conference room);
- to bring in cameramen (if filming has been agreed upon) and to make sure that they leave after 3 or 4 minutes;
- to instruct the waiters to serve refreshments (fruit juices, mineral water, coffee/tea);
- if so agreed, to see to it that the meeting stays within pre-arranged time limits (bearing in mind other activities included in the programme, other engagements of the host, etc.);
- to enter and discretely signal that the time is up;
- in case joint statements for the meadia have been agreed, to make sure that the technical equipment, interpreter, cameramen and journalists are ready and to lead the host and his guest after they had emerged from the meeting, to the place designated for such purposes;
- to wait for the guests to come out of the meeting and escort them to their next appointment;
- or, in case no other engagements have been envisaged (for instance, a meal) to escort guests to the door on their way out.

Furthermore, the tasks of the Protocol Service also include:

- gifts;
- lunch/dinner;
- flags.

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