



At the 12th "Lady and Gentlemen of the Year" award ceremony, held at BelExpo Centre, prizes were awarded to eminent women and men from the Serbian and European public, economic and social life, and the "Gentleman of the Year" award was presented to First Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Serbia Ivica Dacic.

Expressing gratitude for an overarching recognition he received through the award, First Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Serbia Ivica Dacic stressed that he saw this flattering title as a demonstration of the fact that courage, persistence, perseverance and hard work do pay off.

"Awards are a way to recognize one's legacy, efforts and everything he or she represents as an individual. Every such award is but a validation of the motivation one is driven by in life and actions", said Ivica Dacic on the occasion and added: "As I listened closely to the award being announced, I took a trip down the memory lane and remembered my childhood, growing up, university days, but the very beginning of my career, too. Whenever I reminisce like that, one fact crosses my mind – that everything I have experienced and done so far, and that I keep doing, has been guided by the same idea. Namely, the guiding principle that I chose or it rather chose me - a vision of equality, Serbianhood and true patriotism."

Minister Dacic underlined that patriotism was above all a matter of family upbringing much like the way one viewed and treated women.

"This vision was the guiding principle throughout my university studies and early stages of my political career but also as I have, with all my heart, proudly discharged the most responsible state leadership duties. As a result of this idea I became a dedicated diplomat, and it played a role, too, in myself becoming a laurate of all the prizes you have listed in the announcement, including the important award I receive today", Dacic said adding that this idea had constantly compelled him to work tirelessly and devotedly.

"I believed in it and followed it. I have been humble and ardent in my endeavours aiming to prove being worthy of being chosen by this vision. It is this idea that I owe the pleasure of celebrating this year the 30th anniversary of the political party I am heading, while keeping it strong, vibrant and relevant", said the Serbian Foreign Minister.

Dacic observed that the strong motivation and drive that continue to guide him to this day also contributed to the fact that eighteen countries revoked their recognition of the so-called Kosovo making up a total of 96 countries holding such position.

"This vision that I speak of was never fond of solitude. Quite the opposite, it has brought me together with like-minded persons and partners who would become my associates. It helped me bond with persons of different national, religious, language and cultural backgrounds. It sang in harmony with me couplets of patriotism all over the world, brought me friendships and allies in the whole world and blessed me with eternal love for our Serbia", Ivica Dacic stressed.

The Minister noted that he owed a great debt of gratitude to all who had shared this path with him.

"I give credit to all my associates, kindred spirits, partners and all who have appreciated my tireless efforts, but also to my opponents for making me stronger and better.

But the greatest debt of gratitude I owe to her – who has lived and empowered this vision together with me. To her who has built it with me with infallible righteousness. To her who has always had faith in me. To her, a most courageous woman who wrote history with me as we raised our family. To the mother of my children – my Sanja."

The Minister said that he was truly flattered to be awarded the "Gentleman of the Year" prize on the very day honouring women's struggle for their rights as their criticism and judgement carried a lot of weight.

"This means that I have remained true to my beliefs, but also to the family upbringing one is born into. I grew up in a modest family with my mother and sister and the two of them instilled in me those true values as I was growing up and coming into my own. Respect for women, who bear most of the burden that life brings, remains my guiding star even after so many years", Minister Dacic said at the Gentleman of the Year award ceremony.

"I wish to congratulate to all ladies the International Women's Day - 8th March!"