



Appearing on a Pink Television morning show, First Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Serbia Ivica Dacic discussed current affairs and COVID-19 pandemic which hit the whole world.

Asked about Serbian citizens abroad, Minister Dacic said that around 4000 people were repatriated since border shutdowns, including Serbian citizens who were stranded at airports and border crossings, that priorities were being determined giving precedence to persons who had been abroad to receive medical treatment, those on business trips and university students, but that others would also be returned to their homes.

Large Air Serbia aircraft will now focus on transport of goods and aid. Our task to provide assistance and resolve urgent matters has been accomplished and other authorities will take over from there. Another priority are our nationals who have lost their jobs abroad - Minister Dacic said.

The Serbian Foreign Minister asked for understanding with regard to the repatriation of Serbian citizens.

He said that Serbian citizens who wanted to return to Serbia could be found in India, Thailand, Vietnam, Egypt, Somalia, Maldives, in Algeria and Nigeria where Energoprojekt employees were staying, as well as in Mexico, Japan, Congo and the United States where 700 persons so far expressed their wish to return.

They are contacting the responsible diplomatic missions and consular posts, President of the Republic of Serbia and the Prime Minister. Priority lists are being made - the Minister said.

Minister Dacic advised all nationals of the Republic of Serbia to remain where they were if possible, unless they were facing an existential threat, pleading on them to try to understand the

gravity of the situation.

The Minister informed that 450 citizens arrived yesterday from various destinations, 40 from Israel, 144 from Vienna, 81 from Podgorica and 180 from Stuttgart.

"We are providing transport to our citizens free of charge, unlike some countries", the Minister said, adding that Serbian citizens would arrive from Paris and Amsterdam today, and that flights to Berlin, Frankfurt, Moscow, Warsaw and Bratislava would take off in the days ahead.

We agreed to provide transfer from Belgrade to persons from the EU, to take people from Peru to Vienna in the days ahead, while passengers will tomorrow board flights to Berlin and Frankfurt, and then to Moscow. We have been using bus transport as well. However, I call on you all once again to stay put and wait a few more weeks as recommended, until the peak of the epidemic started to decline - Minister Dacic said.

Minister Dacic expressed gratitude to the Petroleum Industry of Serbia (NIS) which donated 270 tons of aviation fuel for the needs of Air Serbia.

Foreign policy is practically non-existent in the world today, it now boils down to tackling the coronavirus related problems - the Minister said.

Minister Dacic explained that an effectively pursued foreign policy has secured Serbia relationships with top world leaders, who were now willing to lend us a helping hand.

In a phone conversation, the Cuban President offered the Foreign Minister assistance in medicaments, which he relayed to the head of the National Health Insurance Fund.

Minister Lavrov called me last night. Russia has been preparing aid for us of which I have duly informed the President - stressed Minister Ivica Dacic.

Reflecting on Pristina's measures against Belgrade, Minister Dacic said that even ancient Greeks would stop their wars during the Olympics and it was only natural that political ones should not be played either during the pandemic.

Serbian Minister of Foreign Affairs Ivica Dacic said today that authorities in Pristina put a ban on trade again through the reciprocity measures, describing the situation in Kosovo as unfathomable given that no-one engaged in fighting the coronavirus pandemic there.