



*After the post of Secretary General of the President, you became the Minister of Foreign Affairs. How different is the work you are doing now, what challenges are you facing and do you miss the daily cooperation with President Aleksandar Vucic?*

I am in frequent private and professional contact with President Vucic. Since foreign policy is to a large degree the duty of the President of the Republic as well, for me, as the former President's Secretary General, this area is not new. I regularly exchange information with the President and discuss foreign policy topics. According to the Constitution, but also according to his personal characteristics, the President is a person who inspires and sets the tone for the policy of our country in various areas, including the area I am currently dealing with. In that sense, his help is both invaluable and irreplaceable.

*The post of a minister is not new to you, as you were the Minister of Justice from 2012 to 2016. To what degree have the years since then and political experience changed your perspective in performing your duties and what are the advantages now compared to then?*

Like most other jobs, politics is a skill that requires lifelong learning and constant improvement. In the recent years, many political circumstances have changed at both the national and international level, and I have changed, too. I will let others be the judge of whether I have personally changed for the better, but I believe that I am undoubtedly wealthier in a professional sense, because I have had the opportunity to work with the best one for many years and to learn from him.

*The Ministry of Foreign Affairs had a bad reputation for a while, the media reported about it as a "hotbed" of starlets. What was the situation on your arrival there? What do you intend to focus on in terms of the organization of work?*

The situation in Serbian diplomacy is not great, but it is not irreparable either, and it will take a lot of strength, effort and time in order for it to return to its old glory days. What I found was a number of systemic and personnel problems, which have lasted for decades, but the storyline about "starlets" does not correspond to the truth and is part of a broader attempt to trivialize our political reality and discredit state institutions.

*And what is the truth then?*

This is, of course, a campaign conducted by a part of the opposition and the media in favor of it, aiming to diminish the trust of the citizens in the state. Not only are there no, as you say, starlets in the Foreign Ministry, but I am in fact encouraged by the number of smart, educated and talented people, both on the list of employees in the Ministry and in the last generation of graduates of the Diplomatic Academy, who are the future of Serbian diplomacy.

*This is a Government with a deadline as early parliamentary elections are expected, together with the Belgrade and presidential elections in the spring of 2022. Is it realistic to expect that the Ministers will be able to achieve some results in a year and a half?*

A year and a half can but does not need to be a short period of time. For people who are not prone to action or do not have a plan, even four years is not enough. As the old saying goes - if one does not know to which port one is sailing, no wind is favorable. In the past two months, I have taken an in-depth look at the system of Serbian diplomacy and worked on defining priorities that can be achieved in a short-term period and embarking towards medium-term and long-term goals. So, figuratively speaking, we know which port we are sailing to, and we will make sure that the wind is favorable for us.

*How do you comment on the predictions, heard even from people from your party, that the Serbian Progressive Party (SNS) will not win the next elections?*

The decision on that will not be made by an individual, but by the citizens of Serbia. One of the important and great innovations in Serbian politics is that President Aleksandar Vucic introduced the criterion of valorizing success according to results. I hope that this change is irreversible, that is, that the opportunity to perform important state duties will no longer be easily given to those who present themselves to citizens through demagoguery and empty talk, but to those who achieve or are able to achieve concrete results.

*How would you describe your cooperation with Prime Minister Ana Brnabic? How do you get along with your colleagues and are you friends with some of them in your private life?*

The results of the Serbian Prime Minister Ana Brnabic are measurable and that is the most important criterion for evaluating someone's work. The Serbian Government is a harmonious organism in which everyone has their part of the job to do, and Prime Minister Brnabic, through the right balance of expertise and authority, ensured that parts of the state apparatus function harmoniously, and not separately. I have excellent and I dare say friendly relations with the Prime Minister. Also, there are persons among the Ministers who I have known for a long time, both privately and professionally.

*In addition to two sons, this year you also had a daughter. What human values do you teach your children?*

Although my children are still young for that kind of life lessons, I teach them and will teach them that they should learn to work in the first place, because that way they will appreciate their own and others' work and be honest, as well as to be good Christians, love their homeland and to set noble goals for themselves, in order to be useful, not only to themselves and their nearest, but also to their society. From the earliest days, I have taught them to love Serbia with all their hearts and to be proud of their ancestors and our national values and traditions. I especially try to have them spend as much time as possible in nature, on Zlatibor, where I come from, but also in the Timok region, where my wife is from.

Source: Kurir