



At the regular monthly press conference held today, First Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Serbia Ivica Dacic announced Serbia's incoming OSCE Chairmanship that would include the Ministerial Council meeting of this international organization, to be held in Belgrade, on 3 and 4 December 2015. The Serbian delegation has just returned from Basel where Switzerland ended its year-long Chairmanship.

Serbia will take on its Chairmanship role on 1 January, while the formal handover will take place at the first OSCE Permanent Council Meeting to be held in Vienna on 15 January and which will be presided over by Minister Dacic.

As pointed out by the Serbian Head of Diplomacy, support that was offered in Basel by all OSCE member states to our incoming chairmanship was evidence of the confidence enjoyed by Serbia in the international arena. All member states have agreed that the advantage of Serbia was its wish to be an unbiased mediator, committed to the OSCE principles, a credible one having good relations with all parties involved. The year of making huge efforts is ahead of us, said Minister Dacic adding that Serbia has been given an opportunity to prove itself as an honest broker in the peaceful resolution of disputes.

The OSCE Chairmanship will also include continued consultations with the member states that Minister Dacic will start in December by paying visits to Moscow (19 December) and Kyiv (22 December) and probably to Paris as well.

Among the activities in the past period Minister Dacic singled out his participation at the Ministerial meeting of the Global Coalition to Counter ISIL held in Brussels and chaired by U.S. Secretary of State John Kerry, the fact that the Individual Partnership Action Plan (IPAP) between Serbia and NATO has been unblocked at the meeting of the NATO Partnerships and Cooperative Security Committee as well as the fact that the first visit by the incumbent Albanian Prime Minister to our country took place at all. In spite of the objections the visit could be viewed as an initial step towards harmonization of positions that would result in concrete progress in the future.

Visits to the Latin American countries – the Argentine and Chile were important for several reasons, said Minister Dacic. Those countries are, inter alia, non-permanent UNSC member states that must be informed about the priorities of our state policy if we want to defend our interests in the best way. Also, those are countries that did not recognize the unilaterally declared independence of Kosovo, and Pristina is trying, through lobbying, to change their position in that regard. The Government of the Republic of Serbia will intensify its contacts with the countries that have not recognized the UDI of Kosovo so far.

At the request of a journalist, Minister Dacic explained that there was no mention of the recognition of the unilaterally declared independence of Kosovo in the official communication with the EU, nor was it obligated to do so. "At the UNSC session Serbia stated clearly, and the Prime Minister reiterated, that it would not recognize Kosovo as an independent state", the

Minister underlined. He pointed to the fact that, in line with the EU documents Serbia's obligation was to achieve progress in the dialogue with Pristina and to normalize the relations with it.

Minister Dacic said that Serbia believed that it would be such a great shame for Russia, for the countries of the region and the entire European Union if the "South Stream" project were not to be developed. The Minister said that for Serbia abandoning of such a project would be a great shame because Serbia would be left without an alternative gas supply route. In view of the idea that Serbia be connected to the gas supply from Bulgaria, Minister Dacic said that it was only the interconnection between Serbia and Bulgaria and that it was no substitute for the South Stream.

Speaking of the forthcoming Summit between China and leaders of the 16 Central and Eastern European countries to be held in Belgrade in mid-December, Minister said that efforts were being made towards signing the Agreement on Revitalization of the Belgrade-Budapest railway between the Prime Ministers of Serbia, Hungary and China. He added that the Prime Ministers of Serbia and China, Aleksandar Vucic and Li Keqiang were expected to officially inaugurate the Zemun-Borca bridge and recalled the interest of the Chinese side in several projects in Serbia, such as the reconstruction of the thermal power plant Kostolac and part of the Ibarska highway. Minister Dacic assessed the arrival of the Chinese Prime Minister as a historic visit because nearly three decades have elapsed since the last visit by a Chinese Prime Minister to Belgrade. He also noted that the Summit of Chinese and 16 Prime Ministers of Central and Eastern Europe in Belgrade is of huge significance not only for our region but for the whole of Europe as well.

The Serbian Government's decision on visa-free entry for holders of foreign passports with valid Schengen visas, British visa or visas of other EU member states or a US visa, including holders of foreign passports who have regulated their residency status in the Schengen Area countries, EU member states or USA, contributed to the development of an environment favourable to foreign investments. Positive trends of an increased number of foreign businessmen and tourists, particularly those from Asia (China, India, Indonesia) as well as from the Middle East countries, have already been observed in that regard.

As already announced, out of 58 diplomatic passports whose holders were former MPs or government officials with expired mandate, 37 passports that were not returned to the Ministry were put into the procedure of declaring them invalid. Following the last appeal made by the Ministry, the remaining 21 were returned or expired, said Minister Dacic.