

# Interview with Mr. Ernesto Massimo Bellelli, the Ambassador of the Republic of Italy in the Republic of Macedonia and Honorary President of 2015 DMWC International Charity Bazaar



**• Your Excellency, how long have you served in Macedonia? Is there anything that sets this experience apart from your previous appointments? Has there been a defining moment of your work in this country?**

I arrived in Macedonia in September 2013, and in recent months I have witnessed the vitality of the country. Each country has its own character, and when I arrived I was immediately told that although Macedonia is a small country, I would not be bored there. I can personally testify to that, and I must say that it is a significant experience in the life of a diplomat, especially in challenging times like these. A special moment in my work here was the period of the Italian Presi-

dency of the EU, which has allowed us to give a new impetus to the bilateral relations based on a shared European vision. In June, as a confirmation of our excellent relations, we expect the visit of the Italian Minister of Foreign Affairs Gentiloni.

**• Can you share your impressions of Macedonia and its people? What are the things, the places and the customs that appeal to you? Have you made any new friends in Macedonia? In what ways are the relations between people here similar or different to those in Italy?**

When I first came here, there were several features that struck me. I was struck in particular by the open and cheerful character of the people, very close

to that of my country and in particular to that of the region of Naples where I come from. It's a cultural proximity that makes it easy for an Italian to feel at home here despite the presence of natural diversity; the tradition of making *ajvar* here reminds me of the making of the tomato sauce for the winter in my region. I think that this similarity is the reason why the largest expat Macedonian community in Europe resides in Italy. In these months I took the opportunity to tour the country and meet different people; I particularly liked, apart from the capital, the city of Bitola with its particular character, and Galichnick where I admired the architecture and traditional Galichnick wedding ceremony.

• **What could be improved about people's behaviour, ways of thinking and work habits in Macedonia?**

Macedonians are an intelligent and educated nation but sometimes they don't feel sufficiently certain of their ability. In particular I think that a better integration of the different ethnic groups could promote a greater awareness of the country and its potential, and give the new

energy that would result in a more positive self-image. Regarding the work habits, it's difficult to generalize. I think there are very good professionals, whose skills should be further developed by focusing on education and culture. Today's world requires an added value that can only come from specialization, in whatever area they operate, from agriculture to industry, from crafts to services.

• **Which assets can Macedonia use for its international promotion and for attracting more tourists and other visitors? Do you have any suggestions for future DMWC Diplomatic Trips?**

I think that Macedonia should aim to promote and enhance two aspects of tourism, which today are appreciated internationally and therefore have a great potential: the cultural-archaeological and natural heritage. Of course, this requires planning and investment to create tourist routes and promote them. DMWC plays a beneficial role by opening the doors to different realities; for future trips I think it might be interesting to "discover" what



the places that are less known to the international community, such as Berovo or Resen, can offer.

• **You are the Chair of the 2015 DMWC International Charity Bazaar dedicated to the International Children's Day. How do you feel about this role? Would you like to comment on the decision to donate the funds raised by this year's Bazaar to PORAKA Centre for Support of Persons with Intellectual Disabilities,**

Centre for the Support of People with Intellectual Disabilities, When I visited one of their day centres, I saw that PORAKA plays an important social role. We will help to renew the centre so that it could accommodate a greater number of children with disabilities under the best conditions.

• **How do you see the role of Dobredoјde Macedonia Welcome Centre in relation to Macedonia's international community and wider**



**for the renovation of a Children's Activity Room at one of their day centres?**

It's an honor and a responsibility to have the Presidency of 2015 DMWC International Charity Bazaar that I took on with the intent to help the promotion of the international image of Skopje and the charity aims of the Bazaar. To do so, this year, besides urging a greater presence of embassies, we have also invited international organizations such as UNICEF to join. Together with the Mayor Koce Trajanovski we identified as the beneficiary of the Bazaar the PORAKA

**society? Does Macedonia Welcome Centre Magazine contribute to it?**

I think that *Dobredoјde Macedonia Welcome Centre Magazine* has an important function as a bridge between the international community and the local environment. It promotes the integration of newcomers and it is a framework that can be useful to institutions, companies and to the Macedonian world of culture not only to internationalize but also promote itself. The Magazine, for its quality and format is a very useful tool highly appreciated by the international community.