

2.2. Arrival and Departure of Heads of Mission

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2.2.1. Agrément



In accordance with Article 4 of the Vienna Convention 1961, Agrément shall be sought for the person proposed to be accredited as the head of mission to the Republic of Latvia. Agrément shall be received before the person concerned officially arrives in Latvia or his/her identity is made public. The Curriculum Vitae of the proposed person shall be attached to the request for the Agrément.

Heads of diplomatic missions seeking Agrément in the Republic of Latvia, are divided into two classes, namely:

That of Ambassadors or Nuncios, accredited to the Head of State and other heads of mission of equivalent rank;

That of *chargés d'affaires (en titre)*, accredited to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and other heads of equivalent rank, including heads of international organisations and representations thereof;

The request for Agrément may be submitted to the Head of State Protocol. Such requests may be made in the form of a verbal note from the mission concerned or from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the sending state. Non-resident missions shall communicate through the respective Latvian mission covering the bilateral relations.

In cases where the head of mission is to be accredited to more than one state and the Head is to reside outside Latvia, it is customary to await the Agrément of the country of residence. If the new head of mission would not reside in the same country as his predecessor, the Republic of Latvia should also be notified in compliance with Article 5, paragraph 1 of the Vienna Convention 1961.

Once Agrément has been granted, State Protocol notifies the sending state through diplomatic channels. The granting of Agrément may then be made public as desired.

Appointment of Charges d'Affaires ad interim

In accordance with Article 19 of the Vienna Convention 1961, if the post of head of mission is vacant, or if the head of mission is unable to perform his duties, a Chargé d'Affaires ad interim shall act provisionally as head of the mission. The name of the Chargé d'Affaires ad interim shall be notified, either by the head of the mission in a letter bearing his or her signature or, in the case where he or she is unable to do so, by the MFA of the sending state to the MFA of the receiving state.

In cases where no member of the diplomatic staff of the mission is present in the receiving state, a member of the administrative and technical staff may, with consent of the receiving state, be designated by the sending state to be in charge of the day-to-day administrative affairs of the mission. Such person will have the title of Charge d'Affaires ad interim.

Please note that a Chargés d'Affaires ad interim may not appoint another Chargés d'Affaires ad interim.

The Ambassador-designate who would be residing in Latvia may arrive at any time following the grant of the Agrément.

The sending state shall request a date for the presentation of the Letters of Credence from the State Protocol. As soon as the sending state and the receiving state agrees on the proposed date and the MFA is notified about the Ambassador-designate's planned date of arrival and the predecessor's date of departure, preparation of the accreditation visit ensues.

The date of the ceremony for the presentation of the Letters of Credence State is set via communication of the State Protocol with the relevant Embassy. Once the proposed date is agreed on, the Embassy or other such institution as agreed, receives an official proposal of the date of the ceremony and an aide-memoire concerning the ceremony from the State Protocol prior to his/her arrival in Riga.

The Ambassador-designate would be welcomed by a State Protocol Officer only at Riga International Airport. Upon arrival by other means of transport, no official welcome is provided.

Although Ambassador-designate is free to choose the time and day of arrival in Riga, the State Protocol Officer will not be present upon arrivals during weekends, National Holidays or out of office hours.

For non-resident Ambassadors-designate, it is recommended that they arrive at least one day prior the day of the ceremony of the presentation of the Letters of Credence. Usually the official programme of the accreditation visit does not exceed 3 working days.

On arrival to take up his/her post as Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary as well as on final departure from Latvia, the expenses concerning the VIP service at Riga International Airport are covered by the MFA. For non-resident Ambassadors transfers from and to the Airport or departure according to the accreditation visit programme are covered by the MFA as well.

The Ambassador-designate may not entertain in an official status until his/ her Letters of Credence have been presented to the President of the Republic of Latvia, an act which marks the formal completion of the accreditation procedures.

Likewise, the Ambassador-designate may not enter into contact with other members of the Cabinet of Ministers or State Secretaries, members of the Saeima (Parliament), other elected representatives of institutions and officials from other Ministries. Similarly, during this period the Ambassador-designate should refrain from giving public interviews or making official declarations to the mass media.

In accordance with Article 13 of the Vienna Convention 1961, precedence among Ambassadors depends on the date of presentation of the Letters of Credence to the President.

2.2.3. Practical Aspects of the Arrival



The State Protocol is in charge of the organisation of the ceremony of presentation of the Letters of Credence. All practical aspects are arranged in close cooperation with the mission of the relevant state.

Once the date of the Ceremony has been determined, the State Protocol expects to receive the following information

time of the arrival of the Ambassador, including the flight number;

names of accompanying persons;

preferred working language to be used at the audiences;

private residence address.

2.2.4. Presentation of the Letters of Credence and Recall



True copies of the Letters of Credence and Recall of the predecessor are presented to the Head of State Protocol or the Deputy Head of State Protocol. During absence of the Head of State Protocol, the Deputy Head of State Protocol may substitute him/her in full capacity during the whole accreditation visit.

Once the Head of the State Protocol has received the true copies of the Letters of Credence and Recall of the predecessor, the Ambassador-designate may contact the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and its officials on a working basis.

Where there is any need for contacts to be made or specific meetings to be held due to a force majeure situation, the Ambassador-designate should inform the Head of State Protocol.

2.2.5. Courtesy Call on the Head of the State Protocol



On the predetermined date (for non-resident Ambassadors, this usually takes place one day prior to the ceremony of presentation of the Letters of Credence) the Ambassador-designate pays a courtesy visit to the Head of State Protocol in order to present the true copies of the Letters of Accreditation and Recall

2.2.6. Ceremony of Presentation of the Letters of Credence and Recall



Dress code: *Dark Suit, National Dress, Diplomatic or Military Uniform*

Venue: *Residence of the President of the Republic of Latvia – Riga Castle*

Official languages: *Latvian and English*

Arrival at the Riga Castle

The Ambassador's party is comprised of the spouse of the Ambassador (if present) and maximum three persons of the diplomatic staff of the Embassy, including the Defence Attaché (if present).

Resident Ambassadors are provided with transportation (a VIP limousine) by the State Protocol only for arrival to and

departure from the Accreditation ceremony at the Riga Castle.

Non-resident Ambassadors are provided with transportation (a VIP limousine) by the State Protocol during the whole accreditation visit.

The Ambassador's limousine is escorted by the State Protocol until arrival at the Riga Castle. Motorcade enters the Riga Castle through the main gate to the inner courtyard. The Head of State Protocol welcomes the Ambassador in the lobby of the Riga Castle and accompanies him/her and the suite to the Riga Hall that is located on the second floor.

Presentation of the Letters of Credence and Recall to the President

Following the first fanfares, the Head of State Protocol accompanies the Ambassador and his/her suite to the White Hall, which is located on the third floor.

Head of State Protocol, the Ambassador and the suite wait in the Blue Saloon until the fanfares end. Upon silence, guards of honour open the doors. The Ambassador together with the suite follows the Head of State Protocol down the red carpet leading to the centre of the hall. The Ambassador stops at the site located by the Head of State Protocol, the accompanying party stays a few steps behind.

The Head of State Protocol introduces the Ambassador to the President by announcing in Latvian:

☞ *"Your Excellency, President of the Republic of Latvia, I have the honour to present to you the Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary to be accredited of..... H.E."*

As soon as the introduction ends, the Ambassador presents himself/herself by saying:

☞ *"Your Excellency, I have the honour to present and to express my"*

Following this, the Ambassador approaches the President and stops at a distance of two steps so it would be possible to hand over the Letters of Credence together with the Letters of Recall of the predecessor.

After the presentation of the Letters of Credence, the Ambassador introduces his/her spouse (if present) and an official photo of the President and the Ambassador (and spouse if present) in front of the national flags is taken. Following that, the Ambassador may introduce his/her suite to the President by saying:

☞ *"Your Excellency, may I present to you the member(s) of my staff...?"*

An official photo with the Ambassador's suite follows.

After the Ceremony, the President invites the Ambassador to the Hall of the Ambassadors for a brief conversation in the presence of the President's Foreign Affairs Advisor and a representative of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Maximum one representative of the diplomatic staff of the Embassy may be present. The Ambassador's spouse (and/or children) and the rest of accompanying delegation await for the Ambassador at the Blue Saloon.

After the conversation the Ambassador and the suite, accompanied by the Head of State Protocol, make their way for the cars and depart from the Riga Castle.

2.2.7. Gifts



It is not customary for gifts to be presented to the President during the ceremony of the presentation of the Letters of Credence. In case a gift has been brought, it should be presented via State Protocol Officer. Where possible, prior notification about intent of presenting a gift should be given.

2.2.8. Other Courtesy Calls



Accreditation visit of a resident Ambassador includes:

- a courtesy call on the Speaker of the Saeima;
- a courtesy call on the State Secretary of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

These visits are organised by the State Protocol and included in the official programme.

Other appointments should be arranged by the Ambassador's office.

Accreditation visit of a non -resident Ambassador includes:

- a courtesy call on the member of the Presidium of the Saeima;
- a courtesy call on the State Secretary of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

These visits are organised by the State Protocol and included in the official programme.

Other appointments should be arranged by the Ambassador's office.

In accordance with Article 10 of the Vienna Convention 1961 the MFA shall be notified of the final departure or the termination of functions within the mission of members of the mission. Where possible, prior notification of the final departure shall also be given.

Once the State Protocol is notified about the date of termination of office of an Ambassador to Latvia via a verbal note, preparation of the farewell visit ensues.

A farewell visit of a resident Ambassador includes:

- a courtesy call to the President of the Republic of Latvia;
- a courtesy call to the Speaker of the Saeima.

The State Secretary hosts a farewell meeting for the departing Ambassador.

Other farewell visits should be arranged by the Ambassador's office.

The expenses concerning the VIP Lounge service at Riga International Airport are covered by the MFA (format 1+ family members).

A farewell visit of a non-resident Ambassador includes:

- a courtesy call to a member of the Presidium of the Saeima;
- a courtesy call to the Secretary of State.

Other farewell visits should be arranged by the Ambassador's office.

The expenses concerning the VIP Lounge Service at the Riga International Airport, as well as transfers from/to the Airport for the departure according to the programme are covered by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (format 1+1).

The State Protocol organises the farewell visits in close cooperation with the mission of the relevant country. In order to arrange the programme of the Ambassador's farewell visit, the State Protocol would appreciate being informed about the planned departure of the Ambassador in due time.

Once the date of the farewell visit has been determined, the State Protocol expects to receive the following information:

- time of the departure of the Ambassador, including the flight number;
- names of accompanying persons;
- preferred working language to be used at the audiences;
- private residence address.

A State Protocol officer escorts the Ambassador to bid farewell only to the Riga International Airport. Upon departures by other means of transport, no escort is provided.

Although Ambassador is free to choose the time and day of departure, the State Protocol Officer will not be present upon departures during weekends, National Holidays or out of office hours.