

Check against delivery

Statement by Mrs. Tamara Rastovac Siamashvili, member of the Serbian
delegation at the Human Dimension Implementation Meeting

Working session 17—Rights of migrants

Warsaw, 2 October 2014

Mr. Moderator,

My delegation aligned itself with the statement of the European Union.

In national capacity I would like to take this opportunity to inform you about the current situation with regard to refugees and internally displaced persons in Serbia. Some examples of good practices were mentioned at the beginning of the afternoon session. I will focus on still present, pressing issues concerning this vulnerable part of population in Serbia.

There are still 44.000 refugees in Serbia. A decrease in the number of refugees is largely a result of their integration to Serbia. With varying degrees of success return is under way in Bosnia and Herzegovina and in Croatia, thus making the total number of returnees in both countries around 140.000. Needless to say is that the number of returnees depends on the level of access to basic rights in the country of their previous residence.

I would like to underline that Serbia is the only country in Europe with protracted refugee situation. Despite this fact, the UNHCR recommended the cessation of refugee status to the refugees from Croatia in April this year, ignoring the fact that there are still many unresolved problems in relation to refugee population from Croatia.

In addition, the UNHCR issued this recommendation in a moment when a Regional process, which should give answers to all the remaining problems, is still under way, and a Regional Housing Program which was mentioned here today is at

the beginning of implementation. Serbia did not accept the UNHCR recommendation and continues to provide protection and assistance to all refugees on its territory.

Furthermore, there are over 200 000 internally displaced persons from Kosovo and Metohija. After fifteen years of international presence, less than 5 percent of total IDP population has returned to the Province.

The main obstacles to sustainable return are: security situation, lack of adequate and efficient mechanisms for protection and access to rights, unresolved issue of restitution of property, inability to use destroyed or occupied residential and agricultural property, etc.

The Republic of Serbia adopted the strategic framework which allows improvement of the living conditions of IDPs and provides durable solutions. With support of the international community, national budget resources, and the participation of local governments, Serbia manages to provide 1.500 housing solutions per year. IDPs make the majority of housing programs beneficiaries.

Mr. Moderator,

In concluding, let me emphasize that Serbia remains committed to continuing cooperation with the international community and the countries in the region to achieve durable and sustainable solutions for refugees and IDPs.

Thank you.