



**STALNA MISIJA REPUBLIKE HRVATSKE PRI OESS-U,
UN-U I MEĐUNARODNIM ORGANIZACIJAMA U BEČU
PERMANENT MISSION OF THE REPUBLIC OF CROATIA
TO THE OSCE, UN AND INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS**

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**Statement by the Delegation of Croatia
Agenda item: Current Issues
719th Meeting of the Permanent Council
3rd July 2008**

In relation to the statement made by the Serbian delegation at the last PC under the item Current Issues on the occasion of the World Refugee Day, the Croatian delegation would like to make further comments:

We certainly consider the issue that was brought before us a very important and sensitive one. Croatia, which at the height of the aggression on its territory and in the recovery period housed thousand of refugees and IDPs, cannot remain indifferent to the plight of those people.

Let us remind the PC that from the beginning of the war in Croatia and then Bosnia and Herzegovina, the Croatian Government undertook enormous steps to integrate more than 100 000 refugees from Bosnia and Herzegovina, more than 45 000 Croat expellees from Serbia, mostly Voivodina and 15 000 Croats from Kosovo, while also working on providing the conditions for the return of 300 000 IDPs.

Although finding an acceptable solution for a high number of refugees and IDPs represented an extreme challenge for a war-torn economy, Croatia proceeded decisively mostly relying on its own resources: 90 per cent of the costs were covered through direct budgetary allocations or by taking loans.

The costs borne amounted to a total of 4 billion euros.

My Government welcomes the readiness of the Serbian Government to fully implement the Sarajevo Declaration. As the Sarajevo Process was stalled at the political level dictated by internal dynamics in Serbia this is a move in the right direction. In the course of last year, my Government along with two other Governments took steps to initiate the holding of a meeting at the highest level

to discuss the open issues and agree on the future steps. Regretfully the steps taken were not met with the adequate response from the other side.

Nevertheless, the Croatian Government stands ready to engage bilaterally in finding solutions designed to close the refugee chapter while at the same time working on the implementation of the two programmes relating to the mandate of the Office in Zagreb.