

Human Dimension Implementation Meeting

Working session 10: Fundamental freedoms II including: Freedom of movement, Treatment of citizens of other states, Migrant workers, the integration of legal migrants
Warsaw, 28 September 2015

Remarks by Mrs. Danijela Popović Rocco, Commissariat for Refugees and Migration of the Republic of Serbia

Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is an honour to speak in this session on behalf of the Government of the Republic of Serbia. The topic of migration is a comprehensive, complex and a global one and deserves to be addressed on many sessions of this year's HDIM as it raises vital human rights issues.

For years Serbia has faced continuously increasing flows of mixed migration, while in 2015 the number of migrants transiting our territory reached its peak. Since the beginning of 2015, more than 142 000 persons have expressed their intention to seek asylum in Serbia, 90% of which are coming from war affected countries. Our Government, led by humanitarian principles, European values and international standards, has invested enormous efforts to register and to assist asylum seekers in an appropriate manner. As the number of asylum seekers increases, Serbia is continuously developing its capacities aiming to provide international protection and to expand accommodation facilities. In order to address this issue in a coordinated manner and to offer a proper response of all competent state institutions, the Government of Serbia established a Working Group for Resolving Problems of Mixed Migration Flows, and it has adopted a Plan for responding to the situation of mass influx of migrants.

Despite this proactive approach, clear political will and our dedication in preventing a humanitarian crisis, Serbia is facing serious challenges in this area.

Due to its strategic and geopolitical position, the Western Balkans have become an important point on one of the major migratory routes on the way to the European Union countries. In the coming winter months, the Western Balkan route will be used even more frequently than the sea route, which will put an additional burden on Serbia.

I would like to stress that more than 90 percent of all costs pertaining to the provision of necessary care for migrants are covered by the State budget. It should also be mentioned that, with the same dynamic of migration remaining, these costs will increase by 150% during the upcoming winter months.

It is also important to mention that Serbia's capacities to accept and provide adequate support in the integration of a large number of persons in need of international protection are limited, especially taking into account that in the past two decades Serbia has accepted over 800 000 refugees and internally displaced persons. Serbia still makes great efforts to complete the integration of more than 300 000 refugees from former Yugoslav republics and to provide for more than 200 000 internally displaced persons from Kosovo and Metohija.

Serbia is committed to meeting all of its obligations. However, it is indispensable that other countries in the OSCE region, as well as the entire international community, undertake appropriate measures and procedures in accordance with their obligations and principle of solidarity.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Let me, at the end, point out that the role of the OSCE has been invaluable both in Serbia and Western Balkans over the years.

Thank you for your attention.