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Statement
by the Permanent Representative of Montenegro Ambassador Slavica Milačić in response to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, H.E. António Guterres at the OSCE Permanent Council No. 984 on February 20, 2014

Mr. Chairperson,

Montenegro joins previous speakers in warmly welcoming the UN High Commissioner for Refugees, Mr. Antonio Guterres to the Permanent Council and thanks him for his comprehensive report and concise presentation on the most challenging refugee and displacement situations.

We fully share, High Commissioner, your view that only political will and the required sources will bring a durable solution to the many thousands who remain displaced as demonstrated in our region. Under the umbrella of Sarajevo process, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Serbia and Montenegro have joined their efforts with the international partners, confirming common commitment to close the displacement chapter. This was sealed by the Declaration signed at the Ministerial Conference in Belgrade in November 2011.

Regional Housing Programme, which is at the heart of this initiative, will result in durable housing solution for around 70.000 refugees and IDPs in all four countries of the region. The Donor Conference held in Sarajevo in 2012 has pledged funding for the Programme. I would like to use this opportunity to reiterate our sincere gratitude to the donor countries and international organizations, notably EU, UNHCR and OSCE for their engagement and valuable support. As regards Montenegro, more than 6,000 persons will benefit from this programme, which includes prefabricated houses, construction of housing units and construction material for houses, estimated at 27.7 million Euros, of which 15% will be provided by the Government of Montenegro.

Mr. Chairperson,

Montenegro remains fully committed to the Sarajevo process and successful implementation of the Regional Housing Programme. Among other activities, including the already approved projects, Financing Framework Agreement was signed on November 5, 2013 in Paris, while the Draft Agreement for the Management of Donor Funds was submitted to the Development Bank of the Council of Europe for its consideration.

According to official data, in Montenegro today resides 3,493 displaced persons from Bosnia and Herzegovina and Croatia, and 8,084 from Kosovo. So far, 9,066 submitted requests for permanent residence, of which 5,430 were approved, while for the temporary stays 365 were filed, of which 103 were resolved.

Montenegro remains firmly committed to close the displacement chapter, through achieving durable and sustainable solution. To this end, Montenegro shall, inter alia, continue to cooperate with the countries of origin in order to facilitate and reduce applicable taxes for obtaining personal documents for DPs and IDPs residing in Montenegro, also through the Regional Civil Documentation Working Group, which she chairs.

Mr. Chairman,

I hope it is not pretentious if I say what Montenegro has done to shelter an enormous refugee waves, which exceeded 20% of total Montenegrin population in one particular period, as well as to solve their legal status, placed Montenegro among the countries that have demonstrated a high level of responsibility and raised the threshold of humanity and solidarity towards this vulnerable population. This was widely recognized and praised. Therefore, I dare say that Montenegro translated the United Nations Convention on Refugees into reality in the best possible manner.

Recalling this difficult and traumatic humanitarian problem, both for refugee waves and Montenegro, which has opened its door widely and provided a chance for their new beginning, we sincerely wish that the drama never happens again at any point of the globe and that every person on this planet lives a life free from suffering and as a decent human being.

In conclusion, we would like to thank High Commissioner for his efforts and his personal commitment to bring the Sarajevo process successfully to its end and wish him and UNHCR every possible success in their important mission.

Thank you.