



**STATEMENT BY AMBASSADOR MIROSLAVA BEHAM,
PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF SERBIA,
UNDER ANY OTHER BUSINESS
AT THE 805th MEETING OF THE OSCE PERMANENT COUNCIL
ON THE CONFERENCE ON REFUGEE ISSUES HELD IN
BELGRADE**

15 April 2010

Mr. Chairman,

My delegation would like to draw the attention of the distinguish Permanent Council to the Regional Ministerial Conference, entitled “Durable Solutions for Refugees and IDPs - Cooperation between the states of the Region”, held in Belgrade on March 25. The Conference was organized by the Government of the Republic of Serbia with the support of the OSCE, the UNHCR and the European Commission and was hosted by Serbian Foreign Minister Vuk Jeremić.

We consider the decisions of the Ministers for Foreign Affairs of Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia and Montenegro to attend the Conference in their common interest to be of particular importance, since we believe that durable solutions for the problems of refugees and IDPs can be found only, if the countries in the region cooperate, in synergy with the relevant international organizations – the OSCE, the UNHCR, the European Commission and the Council of Europe.

The Belgrade Conference was key in revitalizing the refugee issue, and it showed that all four countries concur with the position that additional efforts are needed in order to accelerate the process of finding comprehensive, durable and fair solutions for the problems of refugees and IDPs, based on the principles of the Sarajevo Declaration. We believe that the countries of the region, if they act in concert and resolutely cooperate with the European Commission, the UNHCR, the OSCE and the Council of Europe can overcome all problems existing in this field. Such a result would also mean that we succeeded in making considerable progress in the development of regional relations. It is the explicit position of Serbia that we should not hide problems or cover up issues on which we disagree. All unresolved questions have to be opened, since concealing or postponing them only leads to their radicalization. Finally, all countries of the region have committed

themselves, in the framework of the strategic documents for EU accession, to cooperation in solving outstanding refugee issues.

This is why Serbia hopes that the Conference is an important step forward in the direction of a long-term cooperation, which should result in restoring all rights of refugees and IDPs, as a precondition for the establishment of full cooperation and reconciliation of the peoples in the region.

Serbia believes that the establishment of bilateral and regional mechanisms for further cooperation in resolving open issues related to the problems of refugees and IDPs is needed as soon as possible. In this regard, we would like to inform the Permanent Council that bilateral cooperation between the relevant institutions of the Republic of Serbia and the Republic of Croatia, assisted by the UNHCR, aiming to establish relevant data on the number of refugees and IDPs and on the rights they have materialized so far, has already started. We expect that this data will be the basis for the elaboration of concrete projects with the aim of achieving durable solutions. Elaborating an Action Plan, addressing the specific issues to be resolved, with clearly defined timelines, budgetary commitments and methodologies, is of great significance, as well.

In concluding, Mr. Chairman, let me express our sincere gratitude for the support of all International Organizations involved in this process, in particular for the valuable assistance of the OSCE, and let me underline that we expect their active role to continue and even intensify in the future, so that we can close this chapter of the tragic past in the Balkans.

Please note that the Joint Communiqué, adopted by the Foreign Ministers, as well as the Joint Statement and Discussion Paper of the International Organizations were distributed attached to a Spot report by the OSCE Mission in Belgrade under SEC.FR/144/10 on 26 March 2010.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.