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**Statement by  
delegation of the Republic of Croatia**

**OSCE Review Conference on Human Dimension  
Session 6: Humanitarian Issues and other commitments  
Warsaw, 05 October 2005**

Mrs. Chairman,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Croatia regards discussion of this working session on humanitarian issues as very important, especially as, globally, we are increasingly faced with the indications of shrinking humanitarian space and the important implementation gaps. The OSCE region with almost 5 million persons of concern shares the global challenges in this context. The search for durable solutions in contemporary circumstances becomes more complex and sensitive, requiring sometimes solutions of significant creativity. Discussions on these issues in the framework of the OSCE and the UNHCR should therefore aim for more than identifying the protection gaps and challenges, and offer best practices in this respect.

In this context, I would like to offer an update of progress on solving the refugee situation in Southeastern Europe. A few years ago this situation was identified as protracted and developments in this field have been closely looked into by the OSCE and the UNHCR. Lately, the situation has also been a subject of the new dynamism as the process towards its final resolution is currently taking place in Southeastern Europe. The regional ministerial event that took place in Belgrade in March this year confirmed the political will to strengthen regional cooperation with the view of bringing the refugee chapter in the region to an end by focusing on real needs of the most vulnerable ones. Following this approach, the precarious situation of people still living in collective centers, some of them for more than fifteen years, was naturally singled out as a priority project, currently being developed in cooperation with the four countries in the region. The process has so far identified precisely the needs of the most vulnerable and subsequently offered the range of needs-adjusted solutions.

If this project meets the support of a foreseen donor event – the durable housing solution will be secured for those who are still living in collective centers in the region. This will be also an opportunity to join international solidarity with the political will, and the concrete targeted solutions offered at the regional level.

In order to achieve a comprehensive solution, however, the implementation of measures at national level aimed at creating conditions conducive for durable solutions should effectively continue. Croatia, at its own expense, has been implementing a number of measures for years. They include repossession of property (that in Croatia is almost completed), reconstruction of war damaged housing units and infrastructure, convalidation of pension's years and other measures providing for a comprehensive return policy. An update on their implementation will be distributed in this meeting.

In addition, it has been often stressed, including in the framework of the undergoing regional process, that the issue of so-called former tenancy rights holders should be a part of the process of durable solutions. A few years ago, Croatia introduced the housing care program that enabled ex-OTR to satisfy again their housing needs in Croatia. This program has been implemented in close cooperation with the UNHCR and the OSCE.

The program has been supplemented with a new Action Plan in July this year providing for clearly set measurable targets and increased implementation transparency. Furthermore, with the view to further attract return and ensure that everyone who so wishes, has the opportunity to return to Croatia, Croatian Government adopted on 2<sup>nd</sup> September a decision providing for the option to buy those rented apartments under privileged conditions for refugees, that also covers property of important value in the capital and other major cities. The Government (will) also provide for a new application deadline that – buying-off option becoming a reality – may attract new returns. The OSCE Office in Zagreb has recently issued two spot reports drawing attention to two significant achievements – the mentioned introduction of buy-off option, as well as the completion of the self-imposed housing care benchmark for 2008.

However, in order to complete the durable solutions offer on regional level, similar housing support for those former OTR holders who wish to integrate locally, should be provided for in host countries. This approach is in line with 2005 Sarajevo Declaration providing for the voluntary choice of each refugee to return or integrate. Only a similar offer of the appropriate durable solution can allow free individual choice to become reality.

Together, these measures represent a comprehensive durable solution for all refugees or people who have not yet found durable solution in the region, including former OTR

holders.

In the view of humanitarian and pragmatic spirit confirmed by the Belgrade Conference, as well as the dynamism of following up its conclusions, it is our hope that the same enthusiasm is shared by other countries in the region, and that Southeastern Europe will soon be stricken off the world map of refugee situations.

Thank you.

## **Updates on the efforts of the Government of Croatia regarding sustainable return of refugees**

In Croatia, all necessary conditions have been set for the return of all who really wish to return. The Government of the Republic of Croatia is continuing its efforts to meet its self-imposed targets and accomplish this process in the near future. Recent developments include:

### **I. Housing care of refugees – former occupancy/tenancy right (OTR) holders within and outside areas of special state concern (ASSC)**

#### Administrative processing of application

- Until September 2010, a **total of 13,968 applications** for housing care of former OTR holders were recorded, 9,385 of which were within ASSC, and 4,583 were outside ASSC.
- To date, **10,937 former OTR holders' applications have been administratively processed** (7,617 within ASSC, and 3,320 outside ASSC). Out of the total number of resolved cases, in **7,761 a positive decision** was made (6,218 within ASSC, and 1,543 outside ASSC), and in 3,176 cases the decision was negative (1,399 within ASSC, and 1,777 outside ASSC).

#### The Action Plan for the Accelerated Implementation of the Housing Care Programme within and outside Areas of Special State Concern for the Refugees – Former Tenancy Right Holders Wishing to Return to the Republic of Croatia

- **Target for 2007 has been fully met** – a total of 1,418 housing units for families of ex-OTR holders have been allocated, 1,010 of which within ASSC, and 408 outside ASSC.
- **Target for 2008 has been fully met** –1,427 housing units for families of ex-OTR holders have been allocated, out of which 1,000 within ASSC, and 427 outside ASSC.
- Due to economic recession, and the consequent slowing down of the pace of housing construction, the **target for 2009** has not been fully met. Therefore, the Government of the Republic of Croatia adopted a **Revised Action Plan** this June. In conformity with the new Action Plan, housing care will be provided for a total of 1,265 families of former OTR holders by the end of 2010. The construction or renovation of apartments for 709 families within ASSC is underway and should be completed by mid 2011. Outside ASSC, it is planned to purchase 180 apartments by the end of 2010, and another 143 by mid 2011. This will provide housing care for a **total of 2,117** families of refugees – former OTR holders.
- The Revised Action Plan was discussed at the meeting of the newly established Commission for Monitoring the Implementation of the Housing Care of Returnees and

Refugees, on 7 July 2010, where representatives of the international community were also present.

### Sales of apartments owned by the Republic of Croatia outside ASSC

- In order to enable the sustainable re-integration in the Croatian society of former OTR holders outside the ASSC, the Government of the Republic of Croatia adopted, on 2 September 2010, a Decision on the sales of apartments owned by the Republic of Croatia. The Decision concerns beneficiaries of housing care, or tenants and their close family who are using apartments owned by the Republic of Croatia outside ASSC on the basis of a rental agreement. These users are given the opportunity to purchase the housing units at favorable conditions.

### II. The programme of reconstruction and repair of housing units damaged or destroyed in the war

- The programme of the reconstruction and repair of housing units damaged or destroyed in the war in the Republic of Croatia is in its final stage of implementation. Through this programme, 147,336 damaged housing units have been reconstructed or repaired to date, for which HRK 16.5 billion (EUR 2.3 billion) of budget funds have been spent.
- After the completion of the 2009/2010 Reconstruction Programme, which included 900 family houses, the reconstruction works continued in the period August – September 2010. The Programme includes 850 family houses, and among them priority is given to 100 houses of former OTR holders.
- At the beginning of 2008, a total of 14,000 appeals were lodged, and 5,976 appeals remain outstanding as of August 2010, which is nearly 60% less compared with two previous years. In addition, in the period June – August 2010, 748 appeals were resolved.

### III. Convalidation

- On 31 August 2010, statistical data showed that out of 22,136 requests for the convalidation of years of service, 19,781 (89.36%) were resolved, and 2,355 requests (10.34%) are still being processed.
- Out of 438 requests for the convalidation of the decisions of ‘para-funds’, and requests for pensions with convalidated years of service, 312 requests (71.23%) were resolved, and 126 (28.77%) requests are still being processed.