

22 September 2016

September 2016, Warsaw

Dear Sir/Madam,

Supported by the OSCE Mission to Serbia, since 2010, the network of civil society organisations, has been implementing the project “Fostering NGO Human Rights Network towards Durable Solutions for Refugees and IDPs in the Western Balkan Region”. Its goal is to support civil society regional initiatives, provide a forum for development of joint strategies in addressing specific issues of concern and for instigating joint advocacy initiatives.

Western Balkan region has been faced with the unprecedented refugees’ and migration crisis. With its economic, social, interethnic and security challenges, our region cannot be perceived as a ‘parking lot’ for numerous asylum seekers and migrants who aim to reach EU countries.

However, as a person who comes from the region which still has to cope with the consequences of the large scale displacement caused by the past conflicts and current social and economic challenges, I want to emphasise that in the Western Balkan region we are still struggling with the issues related to ‘old refugee caseload’

We commend efforts of all countries in the region in this regard, for their engagement to resolve all issues related to displaced population in the region.

After several attempts to resolve this issue, finally almost two decades after the signatures were placed on the Peace Accords that ended hostilities in the area of former Yugoslavia, the national governments with the support of the international community, have reached an agreement to close the refugee file in the region. As a result, the Regional Housing Programme has been developed with the goal to provide durable solutions to the most vulnerable displaced persons throughout the region, as an important step towards reconciliation in this part of Europe.

However, remaining challenges remain relate, primarily, to deficiencies in accessing social and economic rights in every respective country in the region.

We stand ready to continue working with the respective institutions in overcoming all obstacles and in reaching durable solutions.

For the end, we hope that the generous donors’ support which have been granted to the region, will continue to ensure successful closure of the refugee files in the WB region. This is especially important because only through joint actions of the partner countries and donors’ support, such mass engagement in closing all pending issues, will be possible.

Thank you for your attention.