

HDIM
WORKING SESSION 5
Humanitarian issues and other commitments
Refugees and displaced persons

Republic of Croatia

Right to reply

Mr. Moderator, Ladies and Gentlemen,

Following the remarks made by some delegations, allow me to start with a statement that Government of the Republic of Croatia offers full and verifiable guarantees for the fulfilment of the remaining OSCE obligations. The results achieved as well as the existence of the joint consultative mechanism known as "The Platform, have been commended through positive assessments by many of our international partners, including the OSCE Mission in Croatia.

Therefore, in the replay this delegation will concentrate on some most important elements, for example provision of housing solutions for ex-tenancy right holders who wish to return: to resolve 1 400 demands by the end of 2007, and to resolve all remaining cases by the end of 2009.

Regarding other requests some delegations could have, let me remind that, along with the implementation of our own programme, Croatian activities are directed towards straightening bilateral cooperation with Sarajevo Declaration signatories. Therefore, we already took an initiative and proposed convening of a Final Ministerial Conference of Sarajevo Declaration as soon as possible, taking into account that Final Conference will evaluate the positive achievements of Sarajevo Declaration and may also prove beneficial for finding a solution of remaining issues.

Mr/s Moderator, additional information will be at the disposal of delegations in the Addendum of this Statement through the distribution of documents.

Thank you.

Additional information :

1) Cooperation through the "Platform"

By establishing a Ministerial level "Platform" in early 2006, setting specific goals to work with the OSCE Mission in Croatia towards and identifying remaining tasks, the Government of Croatia has proved a clear commitment to address all outstanding mandate related issues by the end of 2007.

As a result of the "Platform", the four chapters from the Mission's mandate were successfully fulfilled at the end of the 2006 (civil society, media, police and political issues), followed by consequent transformation and reorganization of the OSCE Mission.

In the Permanent Council it was said by several countries that this "Platform", as an example of gradually reducing the competences of the Mission and shifting them to domestic institutions, could serve as a model for the Region and in the wider OSCE area.

Recently, the mechanism of the "Platform" has been additionally reinforced by workshops on the targeted area of return, in order to familiarize local authorities and local communities with national policies and programmes related to sustainable return and rule of law, including our housing care programs, minority employment in public service and impartial war crimes prosecution.

Five workshops or "Plenaries in the Field" were held in areas of special state concern (in Benkovac, Vukovar, Sisak, Gospić and Knin towns).

During workshops, governmental officials in charge presented to local authorities, local population and non-governmental organizations the Government programs oriented on sustainable return, including models of housing care and implementation of Article 22 of the Constitutional Law on National Minorities (minority employment in administration and judiciary), as well as our efforts for full establishment of Rule of Law on all levels.

2) Providing Housing for former OTR holders

In order to accelerate the process of providing housing for ex-tenancy right holders in and outside the Areas of Special State Concern (ASSC), the Government of the Republic of Croatia has undertaken the following obligations:

- to resolve 1,400 cases of ex-tenancy right holders in and outside the ASSC by the end of 2007 (400 outside the ASSC and 1000 in the ASSC) and
- to resolve all remaining cases by the end of 2009 in and outside the ASSC according to the „turn-key“ system, which includes shortening the deadline for the construction of apartments according to the Public Private Partnership Programme, as well as
- to establish clear financial state budgetary obligations in the year 2007, 2008 and 2009.

There is also the public obligation of the Croatian Government towards the OSCE to fulfil that plan by the end of this year, which the Croatian Prime Minister personally stressed in his speech delivered to the OSCE Permanent Council in July this year.

At the beginning of 2007, a total of 4,068 applications for provision of housing in the ASSC remained unresolved, including: 3,783 for apartment lease, 111 for APN houses (APN - Agency for Transactions and Mediation in Immovable Properties) and 174 for construction material. Out of that number, a total of 490 applications were resolved by September this year and housing facilities allocated to beneficiaries. By the end of the year, the remaining 500 planned beneficiaries will be provided housing according to the „turn-key“ system.

For provision of housing outside the ASSC, a total of 4,500 applications were submitted by the end of September 2005 when the deadline for submission of applications, which was prolonged many times. Until the

present, a total of 2,058 applications have been resolved, with 870 families having been granted approval for provision of housing, 675 applications have been rejected and 328 applications have been suspended mostly because they pertain to the ASSC and should be resolved through a different programme.

By August 2007 a total of 155 apartments were purchased and allocated to ex-tenancy right holders in Osijek, Karlovac, Sisak, Rijeka, Pula, Zadar, Split, Požega, Vinkovci, Zagreb, and by the end of the year, an additional 250 apartments outside the ASSC will be purchased.

In relation to the implementation of the programme for construction of apartment buildings according to the Public Private Partnership model, at the moment around 200 apartments in Osijek and Karlovac are in the design phase after which location permits can be obtained and the tender procedure for finding a suitable partner from the public sector can be initiated.

The administrative procedure for determining the right to provision of housing in and outside the ASSC should also be completed by the end of 2007; after this the precise number of beneficiaries which need to be provided with housing by the end of 2009 will be known.

3) Return of Internally Displaced Persons and Refugees (Sarajevo Declaration)

As regard the Sarajevo process we consider it completed from a political point of view. By this, we mean that the Sarajevo Declaration and its implementation process provided a decisive positive impetus to the settlement of refugee issues in SEE.

The Sarajevo Process has created generally favourable conditions for the individual decisions of any person who wants to return. But, we should not forget that Sarajevo Declaration has also foreseen the local integration of those who want to continue to live in the country of their present residence.

This is the reason why, with the implementation of our own abovementioned programs, granting support to every voluntary individual wishing to return, the Croatian Authorities are ready to cooperate with and assist the other signatories of the Sarajevo Declaration. Therefore, we are ready to look for the resolution of remaining issues through bilateral cooperation with each State participating in the Sarajevo process and Croatia is prepared to provide adequate assistance to those states.

Believing that closing the Ministerial Conference may prove beneficial for evaluating the positive effects of the Sarajevo Declaration, the Government of Croatia already took initiative proposing the convening of such a conference as soon as possible.

To conclude: since the adoption of the Sarajevo Declaration on 31 January 2005, the Croatian Government has continued with the implementation of the programme for the return and local integration of refugees, while simultaneously dealing with other individual issues concerning the application of the Sarajevo Declaration. The deadlines and funds needed for the implementation of the Croatian Road Map have been secured in the State Budget of the Republic of Croatia for 2006 and for 2007, in the amount of HRK 2.1 billion for each year. The three missions, of the OSCE, UNHCR and EC in Croatia have assessed these efforts as positive.