

Statement by the Delegation of Croatia
(Reply to Mr. Dabetic's Statement)
4 October 2006 WS 5

Allow me at the outset to borrow from Mr. Vincent Degert, the Head of the EC's delegation in Zagreb who stated: *Croatia holds a world record concerning refugees return. Nowhere in the world the return was implemented with that pace and efficiency.* This is against the background that the direct war damage in Croatia amounted to approximately 32, 4 billion Euros. All the efforts in the field of refugee return and reconstruction Croatia bear practically alone. The statistics available to us points to the fact that Croatia has received only 1.17 % of total international financial assistance provided for the countries in transition which positioned it as a last among all transition countries in Eastern Europe concerning direct financial assistance per capita.

Concerning the implementation of the Sarajevo Declaration (SD) facts are self explanatory: following the adoption of the SD 1.100 owners came into possession of their houses which brought the process of repossession of property almost close to an end (only 18 cases to be resolved remained). In addition to that 12,500 houses and apartments have been reconstructed, most of them owned by Serb returnees. 8.500 reconstruction claims have been solved and 2.410 remain. Along with that the process of local integration is well advancing, app. 12.000 refugees settled locally as they opted to stay in Croatia rather than return to B and H or Serbia.

The implementation of the Program of housing for former Tenancy Right Holders in urban centers has begun. The first 2.2000 applications, out of total of 4.425 are now being processed with the view to resolve their requests for housing outside of the *Areas of Special State Care*. The majority of the applications should be decided upon by the end of 2006 and beginning of the 2007.

Concerning the Housing Care Program for former Tenancy Rights Holders outside the Area of Special state Concern which the Croatian Government adopted on 25 August of this year it is worth mentioning that the comprehensive solution is envisaged in order to implement the already existing Decision on establishment of the Social Housing Program from 2003. By virtue of this program the Croatian Government will construct and purchase a total of 4000 apartments by the 2011, which will be rented through the protected lease mechanism to those who opted for it. Those who applied for purchasing of the apartments will not be stripped of their previous right granted by the abovementioned Decision from 2003. They will retain the possibility to purchase the apartments under the Socially Subsidized Construction program from 2001. The key notion of the Housing Care Program from 2006 is a non-discriminatory principle, avoiding any discrimination on the ethnic or other basis. For the implementation of the Program the Government will set aside 450 million Euros.

To conclude, Croatia remains fully committed to the implementation of the SD as well as of its own Program for the return of refugees for which only last year the Government allocated 3.65 billion Euros. Croatia is currently preparing the meeting of the Task force with the aim of preparing for the Ministerial meeting by the end of this year.