



**STATEMENT BY AMBASSADOR MIROSLAVA BEHAM,
PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF SERBIA TO THE OSCE,
ON BEHALF OF THE DELEGATIONS OF BOSNIA AND
HERZEGOVINA, CROATIA, MONTENEGRO AND SERBIA,
UNDER CURRENT ISSUES
AT THE 887th MEETING OF
THE OSCE PERMANENT COUNCIL**

10 November 2011

Mr. Chairperson,

On behalf of the delegations of Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Montenegro and Serbia I would like to inform the Permanent Council of the Ministerial Review Conference on Solving the Refugee Situation in the Western Balkans, held on 7 November 2011 in Belgrade.

This high-level event crowned a multi-year effort of our states to assure durable solutions for refugees and internally displaced persons remaining from the 1991-1995 displacement in the region, including IDPs in Montenegro from 1999. The importance of the conference was emphasized by the participation of the Ministers of Foreign Affairs of Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Montenegro and Serbia, as well as the attendance of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees António Guterres, the European Commissioner for Enlargement Štefan Füle, the Vice-Governor of the Council of Europe Development Bank, the Assistant Secretary of State David Robinson from the State Department, as well as representatives of the Council of Europe and, last but not least, the OSCE, represented by the Director of the Office of the Secretary General, Paul Fritch.

The result of the conference was the adoption of the Joint Declaration “On Ending Displacement and Ensuring Durable Solutions for Vulnerable Refugees and Internally Displaced Persons”, signed by the four Ministers. Special emphasis was put in the Declaration on the fact that achieving just, comprehensive and durable solutions for refugees and internally displaced persons in the region will contribute in a crucial manner to deepen good-neighborly relations and stability in the region, as well as to underpin our respective bids to join the European Union.

In this sense, our Governments have agreed upon a Joint Regional Multi-Year Program to secure durable solutions for the most vulnerable refugees and internally displaced persons. This Joint Regional Multi-Year Program is an integral part of the Joint Declaration and will be presented at a Donor Conference in early 2012, for support. It was also agreed that at the Donor Conference, the remaining needs will be presented and pursued individually in parallel by each government, according to need. .

In the Declaration the Ministers expressed in particular their satisfaction that outstanding issues related to the 1991-1995 displacement in the region, including IDPs in Montenegro from 1999, have been solved between the countries such as: ensuring that all refugees accommodated in collective centres will be provided with an adequate housing solutions; establishing a regional framework for addressing the housing needs of vulnerable persons, including vulnerable ex Occupancy/Tenancy Rights holders, and taking into account concrete national programmes; ensuring that facilitated and accelerated procedures are in place to provide guarantee to civil documentation for all refugees, returnees and internally displaced persons; guaranteeing a free and informed choice of durable solutions; managing donated funds through a Trust Fund Mechanism and ensuring continued regional exchange of data.

Mr. Chairperson,

At the conference the Ministers also expressed their deep appreciation for the active role of the international community over the past years, in particular for its persistent efforts and support in seeking durable solutions for refugees and IDPs. Let me in this context highlight the valuable contribution of the OSCE to this process, starting from the Sarajevo Declaration in 2005 up to today. We are particularly grateful for the firm commitments expressed by the Chairperson-in Office, Minister Audronius Ažubalis, as well as Paul Fritch on behalf of the Secretary General to stand ready also in the future to support this process and to help bringing it to a successful end.

We believe that for the effective implementation of the Regional Program two issues will be of vital importance: the continuation of the efforts at the respective national levels with the view to reach the final resolution of the refugee situations and, the participation of as many as possible donors in the Donor conference to be held early next year, which we welcome as the international community's final collective effort to close the chapter of the refugee population from 1991-1995 in the region.

Thank you, Mr. Chairperson.