



The address of First Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs Ivica Dacic in Arilje, at the ceremony of delivering keys of 15 apartments to refugees from Bosnia and Herzegovina and Croatia, within the framework of the Regional Housing Programme in Serbia:

"Distinguished guests,
Ladies and gentlemen,
Dear friends of the Regional Housing Programme,

It gives me great pleasure to address you at this ceremony and mark with you the completion of apartment building construction and a new beginning for the people who will move into these housing units. The pleasure is even greater to know that a week after we laid the foundation stone for new apartments in Veternik, keys to 15 apartments will be given to our fellow citizens who were forced to flee conflict areas of the former Yugoslavia. The apartments we hand over today are housing units completed under Subproject 4 of the Regional Housing Programme.

I would like to recall that the construction of housing units in Arilje represents a part of implementation of the Regional Housing Programme as the most important regional initiative to reach durable solutions to the long-standing problems of persons displaced by conflicts in the 1991-1995 period. The Republic of Serbia is committed to an efficient implementation of undertaken obligations as exemplified by our today's participation in the key delivery ceremony, which is an important symbolic gesture of support for the refugees who opted to settle in the municipality of Arilje.

The construction of housing units in Arilje commenced in July 2017. The project was financed by the Regional Housing Programme Fund, in the amount of 330 thousand EUR and by a contribution of the municipality of Arilje, in the amount of 10 million RSD. Within this project of the Regional Housing Programme, five country houses totalling 55 thousand EUR in value terms, have also been bought.

I would also like to underline that within the Subproject 4 of the Regional Housing Programme there will be a total of 661 housing units for refugees throughout Serbia. Apart from 261 apartments, other types of housing units within this Project, whose worth amounts to 13 million EUR, are almost complete – 70 country houses have been bought out, 30 prefabricated houses have been built, and the largest part of 300 packages of construction material has been

delivered.

Dear friends,

Refugees who were forced to leave their homes throughout the former Yugoslavia at the end of the last century deserve certainty and life in dignity after more than 20 years living as refugees and in conditions unworthy of human beings. In this respect, arriving at a solution for the refugee issue is the single most important moral obligation of the state and of the international community. Our belief, but also the belief of our partners from international organizations, is that we have achieved significant results in this regard, which makes the Regional Housing Programme a successful initiative and a positive example of reaching durable solutions to humanitarian consequences of forced displacement.

The Government of the Republic of Serbia, with other partners, remains firmly committed to and engaged in implementing the Regional Housing Program which will ensure housing for 6,000 families in Serbia, out of which 2 102 persons will have been provided for following today's ceremony. The full implementation of the Programme will improve each individual person's life, although it is only a partial compensation for the suffering triggered by forced displacement from their home regions. We hope that our fellow citizens who move into the apartments today will find peace and security in them, after two decades of hardships. I wish them a warm welcome to their new homes and a successful new beginning!

I would like to thank representatives of the local self-government and the citizens of Arilje for their cooperation, not just in the implementation of the Housing Programme, but also for their help and solidarity during the reception of a few hundred refugees and displaced persons. The understanding and support of the local community remains invaluable.

Last but not least, without mentioning anyone in particular, I would like to take this opportunity to thank all donor countries, as well as our partners from international organizations, who have been supportive since the very beginning of our efforts to help with providing housing for the most adversely affected refugees from Croatia and Bosnia and Herzegovina.

Thank you."