



First Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Serbia Ivica Dacic laid a foundation stone today for the construction of 235 apartments for refugee families from Croatia and Bosnia and Herzegovina residing in the territory of the City of Belgrade.

Also participating in the foundation stone-laying ceremony were Deputy Mayor of Belgrade Andrija Mladenovic, Head of the EU Delegation in Serbia Michael Davenport, Ambassador of the United States of America Kyle Scott, Head of the OSCE Mission to Serbia Peter Burkhard, Council of Europe Development Bank's Deputy Director General for Loans and Social Development Stephan Sellen, UNHCR Representative Francesca Bonelli and Serbia's Commissioner for Refugees Vladimir Cucic.

Minister Dacic who also serves as Chair of the Serbian Government's Commission for Coordination of the Permanent Integration Process of Refugees underlined that it was important that the issue of housing for refugees be resolved after so many years, which would also lead to closing the collective centres.

"What is most important is the fact that their full integration would be brought to an end in this way. The project amounts to a total value of EUR 9.8 million as a part of the regional housing project aiming to resolve the issue of housing for over 16,000 families, i.e., 47,000 refugees in Serbia", Dacic stated.

Head of the EU Delegation to Serbia Michael Davenport underlined that the Regional Housing Programme is a joint multi-year programme of Serbia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro and Croatia, recalling that the European Union would stand firmly behind this project till its completion.

Deputy Mayor of Belgrade Andrija Mladenovic underlined that the City of Belgrade allocated EUR 2.3 million for the Ovca project, as well as additional funding for preparatory works planned to be finished in 14 months, while in parallel with these, construction works are also carried out on 273 additional housing units in Kamendin neighbourhood.

"In the past two years, the City of Belgrade has also enabled the refugees from Croatia and Bosnia and Herzegovina to use village households and prefabricated homes and also donated construction materials, aiming to find a durable solution for our citizens who have for over two

decades been living in our city in poor conditions", said Mladenovic thanking the donors and the Serbian Government for an excellent cooperation in the realization of this project.

The Regional Housing Programme is a joint multi-year project of the Republic of Serbia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro and the Republic of Croatia, aiming to ensure durable housing solutions for approximately 27,000 most vulnerable refugee families, i.e., 74,000 persons in the region. Out of this number 16,780 families are situated in Serbia, more precisely about 45,000 people.

The Regional Housing Programme of the Republic of Serbia is carried out with the support of the OSCE and UNHCR, with funding of the EU as the biggest contributor, as well as the United States of America, Germany, Italy, Norway, Switzerland, Denmark, Turkey, Luxembourg, Cyprus, Romania, the Czech Republic, Slovakia and Hungary.