



First Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Serbia Ivica Dacic attended a ceremony of handing over 40 apartments to refugee families in Krusevac, built within Regional Housing Program – Subproject 5 and in his statement he commended the success of the program whose implementation continued despite the challenges posed by COVID-19 pandemic.

"It gives me pleasure to be able to usher in with you and your families a new beginning and a new phase in your lives today", Minister Dacic pointed out.

As Chairman of the Commission for Coordination of Permanent Integration of Refugees of the Government of the Republic of Serbia, First Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs Ivica Dacic pointed out the importance of Subproject 5. According to the plans, 1847 apartments will be distributed, with 827 of that number in 25 local self-governments.

Minister Dacic thanked all participants in the implementation of the program and congratulated our fellow citizens who moved into their new homes wishing them a happier and carefree future.

"The program diligently implemented by all of us is an example of successful regional cooperation and proof that we can cooperate on the basis of respect, understanding and joint interests. We hope to go on in the same spirit and deepen our cooperation in order to ensure better living conditions for our citizens and development of our society as a whole," Minister Dacic said in conclusion.

{youtube}mOXdvEHSYoM{/youtube}

Entire statement of the First Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Serbia Ivica Dacic follows:

"Dear guests,
Ladies and gentlemen,
Dear friends,

We have gathered here in Krusevac for a worthy cause indeed – to hand out keys to 40 apartments to families forced to leave their homes more than two decades ago in the wake of winds of war.

Today's event is just one of many in view of the fact that we have such events almost every month within the Regional Housing Program in which I have the honor to participate as Chairman of the Commission for Coordination of Permanent Integration of Refugees. The Government, along with other partners, remains firmly committed and devoted to the resolution of refugee question as one of the major moral obligations of Serbia and of international community. I would particularly like to emphasize the fact that the implementation of the project continued despite the challenges posed by COVID-19 pandemic. In that connection, today it gives me pleasure to be able to usher in with you and your families a new beginning and a new phase in your lives.

I would like to recall that the Regional Housing Program in Serbia is aimed at providing housing for around 7000 most vulnerable families from the territory of former Yugoslavia with refugee status. In addition to Serbia, the program is also implemented in Croatia, Bosnia and Herzegovina and Montenegro. It is financed by donations, with EU Member States and the United States as major contributors. I would therefore like to take this opportunity to thank them as well as other international partners for their selfless contribution to this noble goal. The Council of Europe Development Bank manages the Program's fund while the Commissariat for Refugees and Migration is a leading institution in Serbia in charge of the program's implementation while the process of selecting beneficiaries is conducted in cooperation with local self-governments with UNHCR and OSCE oversight.

The apartments we shall give out today are built as part of Subproject 5 and are valued at EUR 52 million, with 38 million collected from donations while the rest represents a national contribution. Within the Subproject, 1847 new apartments will be handed over, of which 827 apartments in 25 local self-governments.

I would also like welcome our hosts – Mayor of the City of Krusevac Mrs. Palurovic and to thank her and other representatives of local self-government who provided land and infrastructure for the construction. It is with great satisfaction that I would like to emphasize that present today with us are also our dear friends and partners in the project – EU Ambassador His Excellency Sam Fabrizi as well as Mrs. Bonelli, head of UNHCR office in Serbia. I commend and thank Mr. Kovacevic for his cooperation on behalf of the Project Management Unit in public sector and Commissioner Cucic who has been engaged most in the implementation of the Regional Housing Program "on the ground". I would like to thank you all most cordially for the support and selfless cooperation towards the implementation of these activities.

Dear friends,

The program diligently implemented by all of us is an example of successful regional cooperation and proof that we can cooperate on the basis of respect, understanding and joint interests. We hope to go on in the same spirit and deepen our cooperation in order to ensure better living conditions for our citizens and development of our society as a whole.

Let me once again congratulate our fellow citizens who are moving into their new homes and wish them a happier and carefree future.

Long live Serbia!"