



First Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Serbia Ivica Dacic attended a ceremony of handing the contracts on the implementation of the second, fourth and fifth waves of the Regional Housing Project, on Saturday in Novi Sad.

Besides Minister Dacic the ceremony was attended by the Commissioner for Refugees and Migration of the Republic of Serbia Vladimir Cucic, Head of the EU Delegation to Serbia Michael Davenport, US Ambassador Michael Kirby, Turkish Ambassador Mehmet Kemal Bozay, UNHCR Representative in Serbia Hans Friedrich Soder, representatives of the OSCE and the Council of Europe Development Bank, as well as the Mayor of Novi Sad Milos Vucevic.

Representatives from 61 municipalities and cities in Serbia were handed the contracts within the framework of the Regional Housing Project for addressing the housing needs of refugees valued at EUR 47. 5 million, at the Serbian National Theatre in Novi Sad, today.

In his remarks at the ceremony Minister Dacic said that the contracts represented further implementation of the Regional Housing Programme for refugees. He reminded of the number of activities implemented so far by Serbia to facilitate the integration of refugees into the community, as well to provide housing solutions for them. Dacic said that the new contracts would provide durable housing for more than 2,000 refugee families from Croatia and Bosnia and Herzegovina.

The First Deputy Prime Minister pointed out that the current number of refugees in Serbia was around 45,000 while the number of requests for providing housing solutions was currently much higher than the available resources.

“Through the Project, EUR 47. 5 million has been allocated for 61 municipalities and cities in Serbia, and it is not any kind of a loan but a grant”, explained Dacic adding that by the final resolution of housing problems of all refugees, over EUR 300 million would be invested for that purpose.

“I hope that all of us in the region will jointly solve the problems of refugees, and that the international community and we will jointly contribute to peace and stabilization”, said Dacic.

Head of the EU Delegation Michael Davenport said that these days, the entire international community was faced with a large influx of refugees unrecorded in history, but that today's event of handing the contracts was an indication that people who had been rendered homeless and became refugees in the nineties had not been forgotten.

According to him, the purchase of 320 village homes and 1,623 housing units would be financed under this programme in Serbia, and 500 packages of construction material would be delivered, providing more than 2,000 families with the housing solution.

He pointed out that the EU had invested 74 million euros in Serbia since 2000 for resolving the refugee problem, underlining that the EU would continue to address these problems until such time there was no single refugee in need of assistance.

US Ambassador Michael Kirby said that this project meant resolving the housing problem for the remaining large group of refugees from the period of the nineties.

He also praised the local community that had been actively involved in resolving this problem by giving the land to build houses and assuming the obligation of the public utility sector.

Ambassador of Turkey in Serbia Bozay said that Turkey's assistance was aimed at providing work for refugees and emphasized the fact that 12 greenhouses were financed in Pancevo, and discussions were underway to provide work for refugees in the municipality of Ljubovija.

Novi Sad Mayor Milos Vucevic said that Novi Sad was interested in the project in many ways, especially because the city took in tens of thousands of refugees in the last 25 years.

Under the contract, the realization of this project of residential buildings construction must be completed by November 2017.