

Intergovernmental event at the ministerial event of Member States of the United Nations on the occasion of the 60th anniversary of the adoption of the 1951 Convention relating to the Status of Refugees and the 50th anniversary of the 1961 Convention on the Reduction of Statelessness,
Geneva, Switzerland, 7-8 December 2011 PM

STATEMENT

MONTENEGRO

Mr. NEBOJŠA KALUĐEROVIĆ,
State Secretary for Political Affairs
Ministry of Foreign Affairs and European Integration

Distinguished Co-chairs,

High Commissioner Guterres,

Excellencies,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is my great pleasure and honour to adress you on behalf of Montenegro on the occasion of commemoration of the 60th anniversary of the UN Convention on Refugees and 50th anniversary of the UN Convention on the Reduction of Statelessness.

Today is an opportunity to reconfirm our clear and firm commitment to the highest principles of the international protection, support and help for the most vulnerable, refugees and stateless persons.

For Montenegro, as well as for the region, we belong to this Conference is not only commemorative. It treats one of the key national priorities of Montenegro and important question of regional developement – the sustainable and durable solution for the problem of refugees and statelessness, by which the Western Balkans Region has been affected for many years.

During the armed conflicts in the nineties Montenegro received and took responsibility for tenths of thousands of refugees and internally displaced persons from the region of former Yugoslavia. Permanent care and seeking solutions to their status, have been humanitarian, but also political, economic and security issue.

Montenegro has met international standards on regulation of nationality and statelessness by adopting the Law on Confirmation of European Convention on Nationality and the Law on Confirmation of the Council of Europe Convention on the Avoidance of Statelessness in Relation to State Succession.

Accession to the UN Convention on Statelessness requires at this moment additional adjustment to the Law on Citizenship in terms of avoidance of possible violations that may occur in the process of

regulation of the legal status of refugees and internally displaced persons now residing in Montenegro.

I would like particularly to point out here that the recently adopted Government Strategy for Refugees and Displaced Persons Issues in Montenegro has been regulated through balanced approach of status of foreigners with permanent residence, on the basis of which they will enjoy, until the law enable them citizenship right, equal rights as Montenegrin citizens, except the right to vote and to be voted.

The issue of civil documentation remains to be of crucial importance for Montenegro, if we want to secure equal access to the rights of all refugees and displaced persons residing in Montenegro, regardless of their current status.

To that end Montenegro recently extended the date for application to obtain status of foreigners with permanent residence until the end of 2012. This particular measure is aimed to adequately regulate the status of all refugees, DPs and IDPs in its territory. This would minimize the possibility of statelessness and deprivation of any rights they may enjoy.

Montenegro's priority and national interest is not only to protect its citizens, but also all persons residing or living in its territory. Flexibility of citizenship and asylum policy and our full commitment to the core EU standards, as a candidate country, represent guarantee that all the goals required by the conventions, which anniversaries we are commemorating today, would be met.

Mr. Chairman,

Montenegro has been very active participant, together with Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia and Serbia, in the Regional Initiative for Permanent Solution of the Issue of Refugees and Internally Displaced Persons. The first stage of the Process has been successfully completed by the adoption of the Joint Declaration signed by foreign ministers of participating countries, with the Regional Program as its integral part.

The goal of the Regional Program is to provide necessary funds for housing solution for more than seventy thousands of vulnerable refugees and IDPs. With active support of UNHCR, European Commission, OSCE, Council of Europe, USA, we continue our project oriented work.

Their effective implementation must be accompanied by adequate financial support by the expected Donor Conference. Therefore, I avail myself of the opportunity to convey on behalf of Montenegro a strong commitment and determination that, in close cooperation with countries in the region, will make this process successful. In that context, let me thank the UNHCR and particularly the High Commissioner Guterres for the active role in the Process and their persistent efforts and support over the past years.

We are fully aware that the refugee problem in the region of the Western Balkans is not top priority in the year marked the High Commissioner Guterres as the refugee crisis year. We do however believe that the concrete results could be achieved in our region.

At the end, let me express decisive commitments of Montenegro to end the protracted refugee situation of the people displaced from the Former Yugoslavia in its territory; to fully harmonize national legislation and procedures related to refugees and statelessness with the corresponding international standards and to actively co-operate with other countries in order to ensure reduction of statelessness.

Thank you!