

ŠTEFAN FÜLE

MEMBER OF THE EUROPEAN COMMISSION

Mr Miodrag Linta
President
Coalition of Refugee Associations
Kraljice Marije 47/2
11000 Belgrade, Serbia

Brussels, 16 November 2011
Ares (2011)

Dear Mr Linta,

Thank you for your letter of 18 October 2011 to the President of the European Commission and myself.

We welcome the efforts of the "Coalition of Refugee Associations" to improve the lives of refugees and displaced persons in the Western Balkans and highly value its active involvement. We share this objective and have continuously supported the Sarajevo process developments. On the occasion of the Ministerial Conference held in Belgrade on 7 November, I had the pleasure to express the Commission's appreciation and support to this joint regional endeavour.

Since the Ministerial Conference in Belgrade in March 2010, the governments of Croatia, Serbia, Bosnia and Herzegovina and Montenegro have worked with determination. We believe that significant achievements have been reached in the past year. The Ministerial Conference and the Joint Declaration signed on 7 November bear witness to their strong commitment to the political process, which should finally lead to durable solutions for the most vulnerable refugees and displaced persons.

The Commission and relevant international stakeholders have strongly supported the four governments in their endeavour to reach this stage. We are now equally determined to support the implementation of the Joint Regional Programme that the four countries have designed, in particular by pledging support at a donors' conference next year.

In reply to your request for changes to the text of the Joint Declaration, please allow me to underline that the ownership of this process lies entirely with the governments involved. It was their prerogative to make any changes to the text.

It is important to recall that further progress in the Sarajevo Process was facilitated by Serbia's more pragmatic needs-based approach. Furthermore, we note that the process envisaged in the Joint Declaration does not prevent the countries from providing support to other categories of refugees at the national level nor does it prevent any individuals from seeking redress through other channels.

The Commission will continue to closely monitor the situation of refugees and displaced persons in the Western Balkans with a view to having this protracted issue resolved.

Yours sincerely,

