

## **ZORAN STANKOVIC'S LETTER TO THE RESIDENTS OF PRESEVO, BUJANOVAC AND MEDVEDJA (2013)**



**Dear Sir/Madam,**

**After more than a year since I was appointed the President of the Coordination Body of the Government of the Republic of Serbia for the Municipalities of Presevo, Bujanovac and Medvedja, the resolution of the most important life problems of the people in this region improved and continued. In that period, I tried to work with the Albanian political leaders on finding the solutions to the economic, social, educational and any other issues that they had defined as the obstacles that needed to be addressed, so that they could live better, on the realization of which the Government of the Republic of Serbia fully contributed through the seven-point Report. The Report includes the issues of representation/ in-integration into the state institutions, economic recovery, health and social welfare, education, culture and the media, the official use of the language, script and national symbols, the decentralization of the judiciary, security and the measures for establishing confidence. We began implementing the Report by having very successful and constructive discussions with the Ministry of Health and proceeded with the Ministry of Justice. Although there has been a delay in the discussions, I expect that things will start running in the New Year and that we will jointly find the way to continue and persevere in solving all the issues.**

At the same time, guided by the principle that all citizens of these municipalities are equally important to us, we are in constant contact with the Serbian representatives of political life from the municipalities of Presevo, Bujanovac and Medvedja. During the past year, we visited all the villages with the Serbian majority population and tried to solve their problems. Among other things, in addition to the high unemployment rate, we were faced with the problem of waste disposal and landfill re-modeling in Rakovac, whereas during a flood that occurred in Presevo and Bujanovac, which was caused by the overflowing of the Moravica river and in which the village of Levosoje suffered the greatest damage, the Coordination Body managed to secure 7 million and 455 thousand dinars from the budget of the Republic of Serbia and fully pay the damages to the residents of the two municipalities. It is very important that we are in constant touch with the political representatives that stand for the interests of parliamentary parties on our political scene and that they are familiar with all our intentions and actively participate in the decision-making. I point out that the Coordination Body is greatly supported by them, while we are always open and ready to help in all the matters that they are faced with.

As you are aware, the Coordination Body's Office re-announced, in 2013, the competition for grants to small and medium-sized enterprises in the amount of 60 million dinars. Upon the completion of the competition, a total of 22 entrepreneurs received the funding: 10 from the municipality of Bujanovac, 8 from the municipality of Presevo and 4 from the municipality of Medvedja. Funds amounting to 60 million dinars have been set aside for this purpose for the next year. The implementation of this program is of strategic interest, while its final result is related to the increased employment, more efficient networking of businessmen on the local, regional, national and international markets, as well as to the improved production for the purpose of achieving economic growth.

32 young people from Bujanovac and Presevo are currently studying at the University of Novi Sad, whose scholarships have been provided by the Coordination Body for three years in a row. The said scholarships amount to 45 thousand dinars per month each. Also, for the fifth time in a row, scholarships for secondary school students from the socially disadvantaged families have been provided this year, too. 284 students receive scholarships, while each secondary school student will be receiving six thousand dinars every month until this June. The organization of the School of the Serbian language for young people in Presevo and Bujanovac continued. Every year, we donate school bags, along with school supplies in them, to elementary school students from Presevo, Bujanovac and Medvedja. So far, we have given joy to five generations of first- graders or to over 5,500 children. Over the past three years, the Coordination Body' Office has been conceiving projects in the field of higher education, too. Back in 2009, departments of the Law and Economics Faculties of the University of Nis were opened in Medvedja. We provided to the students of the Albanian ethnicity a translation of the majority of the textbooks for the first three years. Also, we assign, every year, one-time scholarships of seven thousand dinars to the students who meet the requirements for enrolling in the next year of study. The third generation of students enrolled in Subotica's Faculty of Economics Department this year, whereas we provided a translation of the textbooks for the students who attend classes in Albanian.

Over the last three years, the Coordination Body's Office, along with the Albanian National Council, has contributed to providing 88 textbooks in the Albanian language for primary school students. In addition to the assistance provided for education, the Coordination Body's Office provides funds to the local self-governments and grants a one-time assistance for vulnerable families.

The economic development of Presevo, Bujanovac and Medvedja is one of the key priorities of the Coordination Body and of the Government of the Republic of Serbia. As a continuation of the activities for the economic development and the attraction of investments, the first Fair of Investment Potentials was held in Belgrade last April. Since the beginning of last year, the Coordination Body has been dedicatedly carrying out the activities of reviving the former pivot of Bujanovac's economic development, which is a socially-owned enterprise "Gumoplastika". Bankruptcy proceedings were instigated against the company in 1998. Thanks to the joint efforts of the Government of Serbia and the Coordination Body, "Gumoplastika" is now, after 15 years, out of bankruptcy. Our next step is to find investors for the purpose of reviving the company's manufacturing sector.

These are just a few of success stories that we jointly achieved in 2013. I would like to announce the continuation of the Coordination Body's policy of economic recovery and employment, as well as of education and work with the young and support to the development of the civil sector.

We are thankful to the media that cover each and every of our activities. We will continue our extremely good cooperation with them in the coming period, too.

The Coordination Body shall be particularly focused on the empowerment and development of the economy and on facilitating the economic development of the municipalities of Presevo, Bujanovac and Medvedja.

I call upon all the citizens, representatives of the local self-governments, political parties and associations, to jointly with us resolve all the issues related to the life and work and to an improvement in the quality of life. Our joint work will be done with the assistance of the governmental bodies, fully respecting the Constitution, the laws and the international conventions, as well as equally respecting the rights and obligations. Hoping that we will work together to make the lives of people in Presevo, Bujanovac and Medvedja better, happier and more promising, I wish you personal, family and professional happiness.

May you have lots of success in 2014

Yours faithfully,

President,

Prof. Zoran Srtankovic, PhD