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SRSG visits Cesmin Lug, urges Roma to take advantage of Camp Osterode facilities

PRISTINA – On Tuesday SRSG Søren Jessen-Petersen urged Roma to take advantage of the better conditions offered by the temporary Camp Osterode facilities. His meeting with Roma leaders followed a visit to the Cesmin Lug Roma camp, where he met residents and Roma leaders, who subsequently joined him on a tour of the newly-completed temporary facility in Camp Osterode.

The SRSG encouraged the Roma to look forward and embrace the opportunity provided by the facilities at Camp Osterode. “Nobody anywhere should live in conditions in which the Roma are now living”, said the SRSG, adding that he was pleased that, after several months of hard work in close consultation with the Roma community, and generous donations by several countries and organizations, there is now the choice of a temporary facility.

“There is no doubt whatsoever that what we all want to see is the permanent return to the Mahalla. We are working on that, and mobilising donors for the resources needed to continue the work to rebuild the Mahalla”, said the SRSG. “Pending the permanent return to the Mahalla, we need to offer the Roma a temporary solution. That is why we have worked hard and are now in a position to offer the Roma, in Camp Osterode, good hygiene, good health conditions, electricity, running water and heating. They will also have access to education, recreational facilities for the children and income generation opportunities.”

The SRSG listened to the views and concerns expressed by the Roma leaders with regard to relocation to Camp Osterode. “Of course, this is not the permanent solution, but there is no doubt that conditions are much, much better than what we have in the camps”, said the SRSG, adding that what is important is that the Roma now have a choice. “You are responsible for your families, your fate, your future, and so it is up to you to decide for yourselves”, said the SRSG.