

South-Eastern Europe

Recent Developments

The signature of the Ohrid Agreement in FYR Macedonia, the political agreement between Serbia and Montenegro on their future association and several successful elections have allowed the South-Eastern Europe region to enjoy a period of relative calm and stability. Significant advances have been made in achieving durable solutions for the displaced. More than 95 per cent of those displaced by the conflict in FYR Macedonia will have returned home by the end of 2002. In Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH), nearly 70,000 minority returns had been recorded by the end of August 2002, with the total for the year expected to reach 110,000. A similar number is expected for 2003. By the end of the summer 2002, 59 per cent of all claims for property repossession in BiH had been decided, reflecting the continued momentum of return. However, voluntary repatriation of the remaining 22,000 Croatian Serbs in BiH is proving

Albania
Bosnia and Herzegovina
Croatia
Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (FRY)
The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia
(FYR Macedonia)



difficult and slow, and is impacting negatively on the rate of IDP returns within BiH, particularly to the Republika Srpska. In Croatia, a re-registration exercise demonstrated that only some 8,000 refugees remained without a solution in sight. In the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (FRY), the national strategy to find solutions for refugees is already showing results with more than 40,000 achieving a solution during the first eight months of the year. On the less positive side, a slight increase in the number of IDPs in Serbia was recorded, demonstrating continued departures from Kosovo. In Kosovo, while minority IDP returns continued to be very problematic, most of the refugees from FYR Macedonia have returned home. Overall, the number of persons of concern to UNHCR declined during the first eight months of 2002 by some 125,000 to just over 1.04 million, a trend expected to continue through 2003.

The global financial crisis faced by the Office in the

last quarter of 2002 has necessitated substantial reductions in year-end activities, particularly those in material and logistical support of refugee and IDP returns. This will undoubtedly have a negative effect on the accomplishment of the strategic and country objectives outlined below.

Strategic Objectives

The Humanitarian Issues Working Group of the Peace Implementation Council met in June 2002 and endorsed UNHCR's proposed strategies for the region, framed as follows:

- UNHCR's obligations under Annex 7 of the Dayton Peace Agreement will have been largely met by the end of 2003;
- the successful return by the end of 2002 of the vast majority of those displaced by the conflict in FYR Macedonia brings to a conclusion the role

of the office, as outlined in Annex C of the Orhid Agreement;

- the role of the UNHCR under UN Security Council Resolution 1244 will need to continue indefinitely, pending a final status solution in Kosovo;
- the sustainability of refugee and IDP returns throughout the region will be primarily addressed through the Stability Pact, and in particular, through its Agenda for Regional Action (AREA), and;
- within its core mandate activities and in collaboration with governments, international organisations (IO) and NGO partners, UNHCR will focus its mid- to long-term efforts on the development and passage of appropriate legislative frameworks, capacity-building and training, and the earliest possible establishment of effective national asylum systems throughout the region.

Post-Dayton Activities

Seven years after the Dayton Peace Agreement, those affected by the conflicts of the early 1990s are finally finding solutions at an increasingly rapid rate. By the end of 2003, it is estimated that some

85 per cent of those wishing to return within and to BiH will have done so. The adoption of the national strategy for refugees in Serbia, which includes local settlement and integration of many current refugees from Croatia and BiH, the closure of collective centres and the granting of citizenship, should all reduce dramatically the number of refugees still in need of a solution. This positive trend will allow UNHCR to focus its efforts on immediate re-insertion assistance to returnees, through provision of non-food items and appropriate, flexible quick start projects. In addition, material support will need to continue for vulnerable groups, especially those in collective centres for IDPs, asylum-seekers and refugees, until such time as these centres can be closed or national capacity is sufficient to take on responsibility for continued basic humanitarian assistance. UNHCR's primary role in ensuring implementation of the property laws in BiH will be phased out and handed over to other international institutions. The Return and Reconstruction Task Forces (RRTF) will be dissolved and their role as co-ordinators of assistance will be assumed by the local, regional and national authorities. The Legal Aid and Information Centres



The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia: Returnees receiving returnee kits in Tetovo region. UNHCR / B. Betzelt

(LAIC) network will continue to be supported, while it is integrated into a larger civil society effort promoted by other IOs in the region.

Kosovo Activities

The devolution of some authority to the Provisional Government has given it increasing responsibility for creating the conditions necessary for minority return in safety and dignity. UNHCR will continue to work with these authorities, KFOR and UNMIK to help ensure the success of this effort. The establishment by UNMIK of benchmarks and indicators, in collaboration with UNHCR, on the issues of minority returns, is crucial if measurable progress is to be made by local authorities and if confidence in the return process is to be created.

UNHCR will work with its partners to prevent further displacement of minorities in Kosovo, as well as to facilitate return and reintegration of minority IDPs in their place of origin, whenever and wherever possible. For those refugees remaining from the conflict in FYR Macedonia, UNHCR will continue to provide international protection and humanitarian assistance, until such time as they may be able to voluntarily repatriate.

FYR Macedonia Activities

With only a few thousand remaining refugees in FYR Macedonia, the Office will focus its efforts on the Kosovo refugees residing in collective centres. Some return, reconciliation and re-integration activities will be conducted during the first part of the year in areas of minority IDP and refugee returns. Considerable work remains to be done regarding the statelessness of many habitual residents. The development and implementation of national legislation for the international protection of asylum-seekers/refugees and the establishment of an appropriate national asylum system will be a priority for UNHCR.

Operations

In **Albania**, UNHCR will continue to work with the new Government to establish a legislative framework and procedures for a national asylum system. The three-pronged approach to irregular movements (asylum-seekers, migrants and smuggling/trafficking) will continue to be developed with International

Organisations, NGOs and government partners. Continued basic humanitarian assistance will be provided for the very limited number of extremely vulnerable remaining Kosovar refugees. UNHCR will also provide assistance to the few third country nationals currently entering the status determination procedures conducted by UNHCR.

UNHCR operations in BiH, Croatia, FRY and FYR Macedonia are described in more detail in the following pages.

Management Structure

The UNHCR Regional Co-ordinator position has been transferred from the region to Geneva Headquarters. This role is needed during achievement of the strategic objectives outlined above for the post-Dayton and FYR Macedonia humanitarian programmes, and it will therefore be phased out at the end of 2003. The South-Eastern Europe Operations unit has been fully integrated into the Bureau for Europe, consistent with the structure for the rest of Europe.

Budget (USD)	
Country	Annual Programme
Albania	1,737,376
Bosnia and Herzegovina	17,134,897
Croatia	7,789,183
Federal Republic of Yugoslavia	40,110,803
The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia	4,975,194
Total	71,747,453