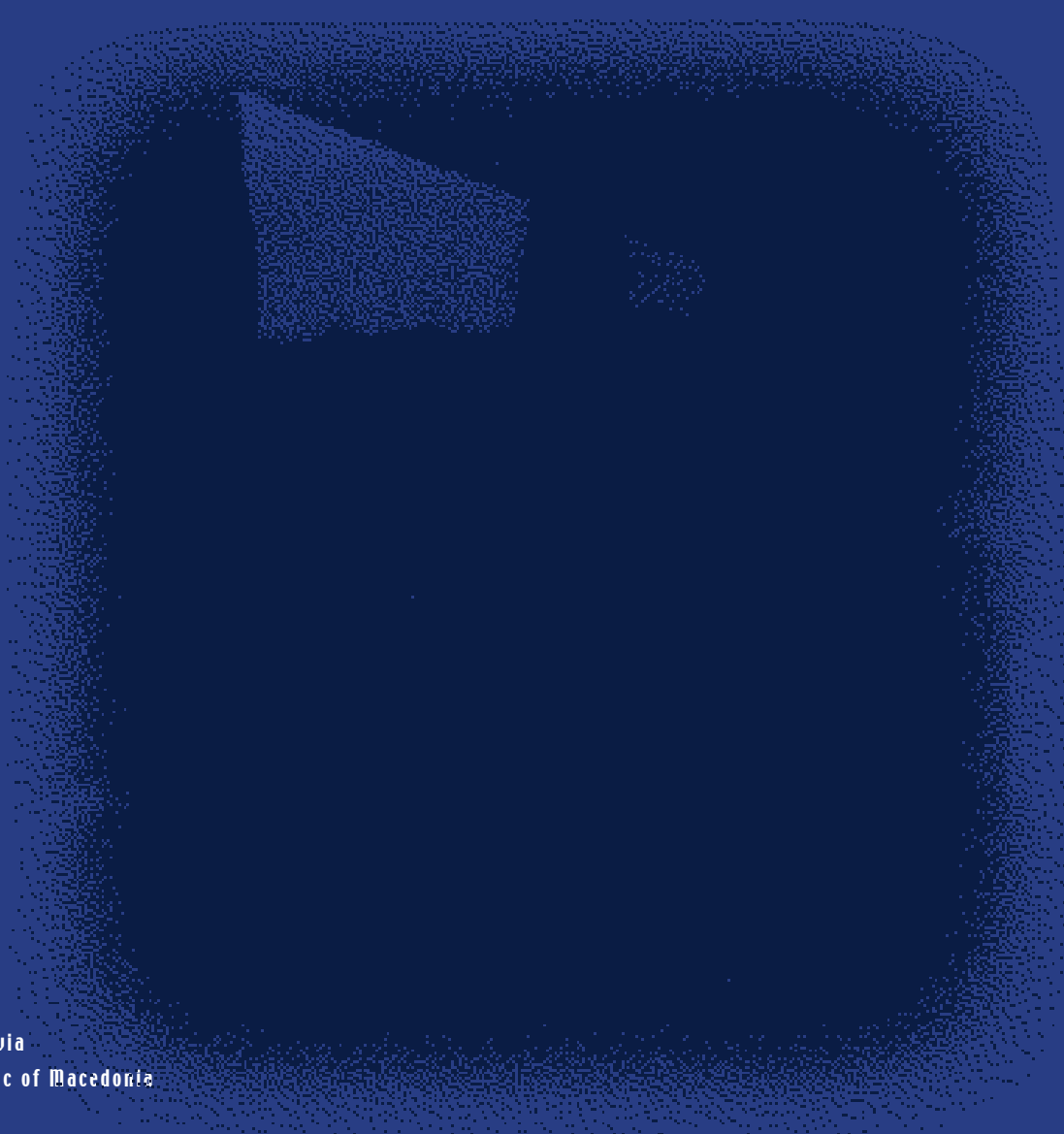


South - Eastern Europe

Recent Developments

Following a year dominated by massive population displacement and suffering caused by the conflict in Kosovo, South-Eastern Europe witnessed a number of positive developments in 2000. The victory of opposition leader Vojislav Kostunica in federal presidential elections in September led to the installation of a democratic regime in the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (FRY). This has created new opportunities in terms of peace and stability in the region, and in the search for solutions to displacement. The change of government is widely believed to have significantly reduced the possibility of conflict that could trigger population displacement in the region. It is also expected to have a positive impact on two of UNHCR's key regional strategic objectives, namely return and local integration of refugees and internally displaced persons (IDPs). With respect to return, it is anticipated that the new government will seek to normalise relations with Bosnia and Herzegovina and Croatia, and that this will have a positive impact in terms of facilitating and increasing refugee returns. With respect to local integration, the large injection of international financial aid that is expected to support the new



Albania
Bosnia and Herzegovina
Croatia
Federal Republic of Yugoslavia
The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia



regime and encourage democratic reforms will dramatically improve the economic and social environment. This will, in turn, encourage many refugees to opt for integration rather than return to an uncertain economic future back home. In Kosovo, a large-scale humanitarian relief effort successfully assisted hundreds of thousands of Kosovars to reintegrate into their home communities. Municipal elections were held in Kosovo without incident on 28 October, giving a substantial victory to Ibrahim Rugova's LDK (Democratic League of Kosovo) party, but were boycotted by the Serb community. The elections were nevertheless widely viewed as an important step in the process of normalisation within the province.

In Bosnia and Herzegovina, hopes for speedy and full implementation of amendments to property laws, combined with improved security conditions, led many IDPs and former refugees to return to areas to which no minorities had dared return since the end of the war. The government began to enforce property legislation more aggressively than in the past, which may encourage higher numbers to return to their homes. The new administration in Croatia took steps to revitalise the stagnant process of minority returns by eliminating discriminatory elements of legislation relating to reconstruction and repossession of property. Both Bosnia and Herzegovina and Croatia witnessed the return of tens of thou-

sands of displaced persons and refugees, mainly from the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia. In Albania and The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, the number of refugees and persons of concern to the High Commissioner declined substantially, thanks to large-scale repatriation to Kosovo.

These developments have raised hopes for continued peace and stability in the region as a whole. On the other hand, more than 220,000 non-Albanians have been displaced from Kosovo into other parts of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, fleeing continued inter-ethnic tension and violence. Ethnic Albanians also continue to leave southern Serbia for the relative safety of Kosovo (to date about 15,000 have done so). More than a million people are still displaced from their homes in the region. Hundreds of thousands of refugees, returnees and displaced persons therefore continue to require support from the international community.

Strategic Objectives

UNHCR's primary objective will be to facilitate returns and protect minority groups, but it will also help to find alternative lasting solutions for those unable to return (working in partnership with governments, NGOs and other agencies). The Office will continue to provide assistance to refugees, IDPs,



returnees, and other vulnerable groups, but will gradually diminish its humanitarian assistance role, as longer-term development and reconstruction specialists assume

their responsibilities. To this end, UNHCR will continue to encourage the relevant international institutions with long-term rehabilitation and development mandates to provide more sustained support to rebuild homes, infrastructure and local economies. UNHCR will continue to urge the passage of legislation to protect asylum-seekers, refugees, returnees and IDPs, and encourage states to provide services for the most vulnerable. UNHCR will likewise urge all countries in the region to develop national asylum systems consistent with international and regional standards. In all its activities in the region, UNHCR seeks to promote stability.

A number of international initiatives aim to foster peace by providing frameworks within which to address the problems associated with displacement. The Peace Implementation Council continues to seek the full implementation of the 1995 Dayton Peace Agreement. The Stability Pact for South Eastern Europe is intended to promote regional stability by funding initiatives on democratisation and human rights, economic reconstruction and development, and security. Such international efforts will remain crucial for several years, if the return and integration of displaced populations are to be achieved in a climate of longer-term regional stability.

Post-Dayton Activities

The year 2001 will be a crucial one for consolidating the return process throughout the region. UNHCR's primary objective will remain the voluntary return of refugees and IDPs to, from and within Bosnia and Herzegovina, as well as Croatia and the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (and immediate assistance to those who have returned). In the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, UNHCR will continue to protect and assist some 500,000 refugees, mainly from Bosnia and Herzegovina and Croatia. The change of administration in the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia could augur well for the economy and the job market, opening up new options for refugees and the displaced. In the short-term, however, humanitarian needs will not significantly diminish. Some 230,000 refugees will receive food and non-food items in the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia and UNHCR will assist 35,000 refugees accommodated in collective centres. The Office will help refugees to repatriate voluntarily, but will also encourage the new authorities to help them integrate locally if they wish to do so.

UNHCR will continue to strengthen region-wide co-operation on returns and mobilise international support, especially for longer-term reconstruction and reintegration. At the same time, the Office will continue to assist the authorities in Bosnia and Herzegovina and Croatia in providing services for those in need and in restoring national protection procedures. The agency will also maintain its support to legal aid centres and nurture relevant organisations within civil society. The Bosnian Women's Initiative will con-

tinue to empower women to become active agents of social change, reconciliation and economic development. UNHCR will consolidate its efforts to ascertain the aspirations of refugees and displaced persons and verify their numbers by completing registration exercises in the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia. While return will continue to be promoted as the best durable solution to their plight, the wishes of those who opt to settle locally will also be respected and supported.

Kosovo-Related Activities

The Federal Republic of Yugoslavia hosts more than 220,000 IDPs from Kosovo, of whom 165,000 will receive food and relief items and 15,000 will be assisted in collective centres during 2001. The Office will work to remove obstacles hindering the voluntary return to Kosovo of displaced minority communities. It will provide direct humanitarian assistance to those who are returning and assist the most vulnerable returnees, IDPs and minorities at-risk within Kosovo. UNHCR will work closely with KFOR, UNMIK and other international actors to promote inter-ethnic co-existence and respect for the rights of minorities, especially their right to remain in or return to Kosovo. It is expected that by the end of the year, the minority population in Kosovo will enjoy full access to assistance and services provided by the UNMIK/Joint Interim Administrative Structure. Operations in Albania and The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia will focus on protection, strengthening asylum and providing training in refugee law, while continuing to assist the most vulnerable refugees.



Operations

The UNHCR Special Envoy for Kosovo-related programmes, based in Pristina, heads operations in the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia. At UNHCR Headquarters, the Co-ordinator for South Eastern Europe provides support to the Office of the Special Envoy in Kosovo, while at the same time co-ordinating operations in Bosnia and Herzegovina and Croatia and in The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and Albania.

UNHCR's country programmes in **Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, The Federal Republic of Yugoslavia and The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia** are described in separate chapters.

Following the repatriation to Kosovo of some 430,000 refugees, the number of refugees in **Albania** continued to decline from over 4,000 at the beginning of 2000 to fewer than 1,000. UNHCR's post-emergency strategy focuses on helping the Government to develop an effective asylum system. In addition to providing expertise on asylum legislation, UNHCR is also helping build national capacity by training relevant local officials and NGOs. Albania continues to be a country of transit for asylum-seekers, refugees, other migrants and victims of human trafficking. UNHCR is working with the Government and other international and regional organisations on an approach which will effectively protect asylum-seekers and refugees, while also addressing the situation of migrants and victims of human trafficking, especially women. In 2001, UNHCR will continue to provide humanitarian assistance for about 1,000 asylum-seekers, refugees and extremely vulnerable individuals of concern. The latter group will receive direct care and counselling through a community services outreach project. For Kosovo Albanian refugees, limited local integration activities will also be implemented, such as vocational training and small credit schemes to encourage self-reliance. The Office will continue to finance a collective centre housing extremely vulnerable refugees and those with special needs.

BUDGET (USD)	
Country	Annual Programme
Albania	4,119,028
Bosnia and Herzegovina	34,137,115
Croatia	13,119,013
Macedonia (The former Yug. Rep. of)	8,061,783
Yugoslavia (Federal Rep. of) ¹	79,217,090
Regional Projects ²	100,000
Total	138,754,029

¹ Includes costs related to the Office of the Special Envoy of USD 796,900.

² Includes voluntary repatriation activities in South-Eastern Europe.