



South-Eastern Europe

Recent developments

The region has remained relatively calm in the past year, with only Kosovo continuing to be affected by significant ethnically motivated violence. Almost half of the 2.2 million people displaced by the wars in the region have now returned, the vast majority to their former homes in Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH). Although large numbers of people are still displaced, progress has been considerable in achieving durable solutions. Property repossession and reconstruction remain the critical issues affecting return throughout the region. In BiH, nearly all property claims will have been resolved by the end of 2003, a major milestone for the country. Unfortunately, some 50,000 housing units are still needed for returning refugees and IDPs. In Croatia, the number of refugees has decreased to fewer than 5,000, but the repossession of property remains very slow for those wishing to return from BiH and Serbia and Montenegro (SCG). Collective centres are being closed in both SCG and BiH as alternative housing is found. Effectively targeted bilateral development assistance will be essential for the provision of housing to persons of concern to UNHCR throughout the region. In SCG, the authorities are moving quickly to identify durable solutions for refugees, particularly through local integration. In the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia (FYR Macedonia), some lingering political tensions have

Albania

Bosnia and Herzegovina

Croatia

Serbia and Montenegro

The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia



inhibited the last returns of the displaced and some housing units still need reconstruction. Unfortunately, there is little hope of an early end to the plight of IDPs from Kosovo.

Strategic objectives

By the end of 2003, UNHCR will have made good its obligations under Annex VII of the Dayton Agreement for the return of minority refugees and IDPs, as endorsed by the Humanitarian Issues Working Group (HIWG) in June 2002. Return movements continued slowly in 2003, a trend that will probably be the same in the months and years to come. The longer-term objective of the Office in the region is the establishment of appropriate legislative frameworks and functional asylum systems in line with international standards.

Durable solutions

The sustainability of the returns achieved to date will largely depend on continuing long-term development assistance and the general economic recovery of the region. The re-registration of the region's refugees, to be undertaken shortly in several countries, will probably confirm that durable solutions have already been found for many refugees, particularly in SCG. Those

vulnerable refugees who are unable or unwilling to return home or locally integrate will require continuing humanitarian assistance. By 2005, refugee populations of direct concern to UNHCR are likely to be substantially reduced.

Operations

In **Albania**, government restructuring is continuing, with the responsibility for refugee and asylum issues being re-assigned more clearly. This should allow for increased government capacity-building and lead to use of the new reception centre for asylum-seekers. Pre-screening of mixed migration flows will remain a priority, as well as improved access to protection. In 2003, **Croatia** passed a law on asylum, which will come into force in June 2004. This should allow for the early establishment of fair and efficient asylum procedures, consistent with international standards. Durable solutions for the remaining 4,000 refugees will need to be identified. In addition, the return and reintegration of some 21,000 Croatian Serb refugees currently in BiH, as well as those still wanting to return from SCG, will remain a priority. In **FYR Macedonia**, the Government passed a Law on Asylum and Temporary Protection in August 2003. The drafting and adoption of appropriate by-laws for its implementation and the

development of reception policies and facilities will be the focus of the Office's efforts in 2004. Some 2,500 refugees from Kosovo who were granted temporary protection by the Government will now be given individual access to the asylum procedure.

UNHCR operations in BiH and Serbia and Montenegro (including Kosovo) are described in more detail in the following pages.

Management structure

The South-Eastern Europe Operation will cease to function as an independent operation at the end of 2003. Continuing activities and staff will be absorbed into the Bureau for Europe. UNHCR field offices in the region will be closed by the last quarter of 2004. In 2005, representative offices will be maintained in all countries, with sub-offices in only BiH and SCG (including Kosovo). Total staffing in the region at the end of 2004 will be 296, reduced from 905 in January 2000.

Budget (USD)	
Country	Annual Programme
Albania	1,188,929
Bosnia and Herzegovina	11,944,867
Croatia	4,735,738
Serbia and Montenegro	27,372,845
The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia	3,315,323
Total	48,557,702



The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia: A UNHCR aid convoy delivered "return kits" to a remote mountain village of Gornje Palciste, south of Tetovo. Most of the 110 villagers fled during the fighting between the Macedonian forces and opposing elements. UNHCR / M. Shinohara