



# South-Eastern Europe

## Working environment

The inhabitants of the western Balkans, including some 130,000 refugees and 430,000 internally displaced persons (IDPs) whose lives were disrupted by the wars in the former Yugoslavia, witnessed significant political developments in 2006. Perhaps the most notable was the referendum in Montenegro in May that led to its declaration of independence from the State Union of Serbia and Montenegro on 3 June 2006. A week later the Republic of Montenegro became the 192<sup>nd</sup> Member State of the United Nations.

Negotiations on the future status of the province of Kosovo (Serbia) began with the Secretary-General's nomination in November 2005 of Martti Ahtisaari as his Special Envoy for the Future Status Process for Kosovo. His recommendations will form the basis for a decision by the Security Council on the future status of Kosovo.

Although there has been some improvement in the overall security situation and freedom of movement in Kosovo, instances of harassment, abuse and low-level violence against minorities in the province (particularly ethnic Serbs and Roma) continue. This highlights the need for international protection and greater preparedness on the part of UNHCR, pending a decision on Kosovo's status.

The objectives of the Sarajevo Declaration of January 2005, which are to end all displacement in the region by the end of 2006 and ease the return or local

Albania

Bosnia and Herzegovina

Croatia

Montenegro

Serbia

The former Yugoslav Republic of  
Macedonia



integration of refugees and IDPs, will not be met in this timeframe. This is partially due to unresolved tenancy rights issues and poor socio-economic conditions, both of which hinder reintegration or local integration in the region.

## Strategy

UNHCR's objectives in South-Eastern Europe focus on refugees and IDPs displaced by the wars in Croatia and Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH); refugees and IDPs displaced from and within Kosovo; and asylum-system development.

The Office will continue to seek durable solutions for those displaced by the wars in Croatia and BiH. At the same time, it will gradually reduce its operational involvement in this region. This follows the recognition that the main need here is for development, as lasting solutions for the displaced are dependent on improved socio-economic conditions. UNHCR's phase-down will entail the closure of three field offices in BiH and two satellite offices in Croatia.

The closure of these offices in Croatia and BiH will enable UNHCR to focus its attention on Kosovo. There, the Office will pursue a flexible strategy to deal with a rapidly changing environment and cooperate with its partners to provide assistance to the most vulnerable refugees and IDPs. The Office will also look at local integration and repatriation, subject to the consent of the authorities and the displaced.

UNHCR's overall objective in the region is to help governments and other national actors develop an asylum system capable of protecting refugees and asylum-seekers in accordance with international standards. Much still needs to be done to fully implement asylum legislation and establish adequate reception conditions. Another goal is to establish region-wide monitoring and referral systems for survivors of sexual and gender-based violence.

## Constraints

For the reasons previously stated, it is unlikely that the goals of the Sarajevo Declaration regarding those displaced by the wars in Croatia and BiH will be met with the set timeframe. Unemployment and bureaucratic obstacles also impede the search for durable solutions.

In Kosovo, the precarious situation of minorities, and uncertainties surrounding the outcome of the status talks, make it difficult to find durable solutions for persons of concern in the province.

## Operations

In **Albania**, UNHCR will continue to cooperate with the Government to protect and assist asylum-seekers and refugees. This will include monitoring of the refugee status determination procedure conducted by the Government, the search for durable solutions for recognized refugees



Fostering self-sufficiency for displaced people in Montenegro. UNHCR / C. Cazzurro

and their temporary accommodation, primarily in the National Reception Centre.

In **Croatia**, UNHCR will reduce its capacity to monitor the post-Dayton population of concern (mainly returnees from Serbia and BiH) with the closure of the satellite offices in Sisak and Knin. However, it will continue to provide legal advice and assistance in resolving property and housing disputes. The Office will also work with the Government to develop an efficient and fair asylum system in line with international standards.

In **Montenegro**, UNHCR will focus on identifying durable solutions for refugees from BiH and Croatia by pursuing voluntary repatriation, culminating in the closure of the collective centre. It will place greater emphasis on assisting those who fled to Montenegro from Kosovo in 1999 and on finding durable solutions for them. This will include clarifying their legal status — with a focus on the prevention of statelessness. Montenegro adopted a new asylum law in May 2006; UNHCR will now help the authorities to implement it. These activities are

linked to UNHCR operations in the neighbouring countries.

In mid-2006 there were approximately 2,000 refugees in **The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia**. Nearly all are ethnic minorities from Kosovo, particularly Roma, Ashkali and Egyptians who fled in 1999. The search for durable solutions for these refugees is constrained by the uncertainties surrounding Kosovo's future status and the absence of possibilities for their local integration. UNHCR will continue to provide these people with basic assistance and work with the Government to allow them to stay in the country. Building on an established monitoring and referral system, the Office will pay special attention to sexual and gender-based violence, which is particularly acute in this group.

UNHCR's operations in BiH and Serbia (including Kosovo) are described in greater detail in separate chapters.

Budget (USD)		
Country	Annual Programme Budget	
	2006	2007
Albania	1,119,392	734,890
Bosnia and Herzegovina	10,688,257	6,702,164
Croatia	4,513,641	3,191,177
Montenegro	0	2,162,812
Serbia <sup>1</sup>	24,918,958	20,956,650
The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia	3,901,288	3,085,829
<b>Total</b>	<b>45,141,536</b>	<b>36,833,522</b>

<sup>1</sup> In 2006, UNHCR's activities in Montenegro, amounting to USD 2,387,055 are included in the budget for Serbia.

