

South-Eastern Europe

Recent Developments

Following a year of relative progress in the pursuit of durable solutions for more than one million people still displaced in South-Eastern Europe, there was renewed upheaval. More than 115,000 people were uprooted from their homes in the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, in a conflict that threatened the entire region, and raised questions about the durability of peace in a region plagued for more than a decade by a seemingly relentless cycle of population displacement. During the first half of 2001, UNHCR was obliged once again to set up emergency operations to protect and assist refugees in neighbouring countries.

Most of those uprooted were internally displaced within FYR Macedonia, and were primarily supported by the Government authorities and the Red Cross movement. Others fled to safety in neighbouring Kosovo and Serbia, and further afield. In the latter half of the year, a fragile peace was ushered in by the Framework Agreement between FYR Macedonia and ethnic Albanian rebels: this was a political solution backed up by a NATO operation to disarm the rebel fighters. It led to a decrease in the numbers of refugees and persons of concern to UNHCR, but many were still not able to return to their homes due to continued instability and distrust between the ethnic Macedonian and Albanian communities.

Despite these troubling developments, UNHCR saw steady progress elsewhere in the region towards the return and local integration of displaced populations. While progress in some areas was substantial, in others it consisted in more tentative preliminary moves. In southern Serbia, the end of the conflict between Albanian rebels and the Yugoslav army paved the way for the return of more than 5,500 internally displaced people (IDPs) who had fled to Kosovo since 1999. In Bosnia and Herzegovina, and in Croatia, the return of minority populations, in many respects the litmus test for return, continued daily to become a reality. As a result of improved security and the implementation of property laws, more than 150,000 members of ethnic minorities had returned to their homes in Bosnia and Herzegovina by year's end (out of a total of nearly 760,000 displaced people who returned since the war ended in 1995). In Croatia, the Government made further progress in its efforts to accelerate the minority return process by beginning to evict illegal occupants of refugees' homes.

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



These encouraging developments grew out of the progress made over the previous year and led to continued hopes that, despite the setbacks witnessed in FYR Macedonia, peace and stability would in time be consolidated across the region as a whole. Nonetheless, hundreds of thousands of refugees, returnees, and displaced persons remain dependent upon international support.

Strategic Objectives

In 2002, UNHCR's primary objective is to work in partnership with Governments, NGOs, and other agencies to facilitate returns and protect minority groups. It will also help to find alternative lasting solutions for those unable to return. While UNHCR will continue to provide protection and assistance to refugees, IDPs, returnees, and other vulnerable groups, it will also enter the third year of a gradual phase-down of its humanitarian assistance role. This is consistent with the shift in needs towards longer-term development and reconstruction assistance. To this end, UNHCR will continue to encourage the relevant international institutions with long-term rehabilitation and development mandates to accelerate the provision of more sustained support to rebuild homes, infrastructure and local

economies. UNHCR will furthermore promote the passage and implementation of legislation to protect asylum-seekers, refugees, returnees and IDPs, and encourage states to provide services for the most vulnerable. UNHCR will continue to press all countries in the region to develop national asylum systems consistent with international and regional standards. Much of UNHCR's future work in the region will thus focus on national capacity building and training activities, in concert with the EU and in collaboration with the Stability Pact Working Table III.

In all its activities in the region, UNHCR seeks to promote the stability of populations; it works within the framework of several international initiatives to address the problems associated with displacement. The Peace Implementation Council (PIC) continues to seek the full implementation of the 1995 Dayton Peace Agreement. The Stability Pact for South-Eastern Europe seeks 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 long-term regional stability.

Post Dayton Activities

Seven years after the Dayton Peace Agreement, the year 2002 will be marked by a significant reduction in UNHCR's large-scale assistance activities aimed at consolidating the return of refugees and displaced people who fled during the conflicts in Bosnia and Herzegovina and Croatia. UNHCR's primary objective will remain the voluntary return of refugees and IDPs to, from and within the three countries of this sub-region: Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia and the Federal Republic of

Croatia in providing services for those in need (i.e. restore national protection, in place of international protection). UNHCR will also maintain its support to legal aid centres and nurture relevant local organisations within civil society.

In the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, UNHCR will continue to provide protection and assistance to some 398,000 refugees, mainly from Bosnia and Herzegovina and Croatia. Despite the economic hopes raised by the change of government in Belgrade at the end of the year 2000, humanitarian



Bosnia and Herzegovina: Returnees rebuilding their house. *UNHCR/R. Chalasani.*

Yugoslavia. UNHCR will continue to provide immediate assistance to returnees during the initial phase of their reintegration. UNHCR will also continue to strengthen region-wide co-operation on returns and mobilise international support for longer-term reconstruction and reintegration, in order to discourage future population drift. At the same time, UNHCR will continue to assist the authorities in Bosnia and Herzegovina and

needs have not significantly diminished. Some 250,000 refugees will receive food and non-food items, while a further 21,500 will receive more comprehensive assistance including accommodation in collective centres. UNHCR will help those refugees who choose to voluntarily repatriate, but at the same time work with the local authorities to enable local integration of those who wish to stay. During the re-

registration of refugees concluded in 2001, some 24,000 refugees indicated a wish to voluntarily repatriate, while roughly 240,000 opted for local integration. The decision of the remainder will depend upon the success or failure of efforts to support the choices made by these groups.

FYR Macedonia and Kosovo-Related Activities

Under a supplementary programme, UNHCR will maintain its emergency preparedness in the region to accommodate

any new population flows which may arise in the event of further conflict in the region. A standing capacity to provide assistance to up to 20,000 refugees will be maintained in the Province of Kosovo, and up to 10,000 in the Republic of Serbia. The Office will also continue in other parts of the region to provide protection and assistance to refugees from FRY Macedonia who are unable to return home. At the same time, UNHCR's primary objective will be to facilitate the safe return to and reintegration within FYR Macedonia of those displaced by the conflict in 2001.

UNHCR's programmes in FYR Macedonia will aim at promoting stability and creating conditions for return through the implementation of a range of confidence-building measures in returnee areas. These include the provision of basic assistance packages to returnees, bus services to promote freedom of movement across ethnic lines, quick impact projects to restore infrastructure and income-generating enterprise, and protection activities with a particular focus on minority groups, particularly in the areas of citizenship and personal documentation.

The Federal Republic of Yugoslavia hosts more than 220,000 IDPs from Kosovo. Some 150,000 will receive food and relief items and a further 7,000 will be assisted in collective centres during 2002. UNHCR will continue to work to remove obstacles to the voluntary return to Kosovo of displaced minority communities. It will provide direct humanitarian assistance to those who are in the process of returning and, within Kosovo, continue to assist the most vulnerable returnees, IDPs, and members of minorities at risk.

Operations

The UNHCR Regional Co-ordinator is responsible for field-based co-ordination of operations in Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia and FYR Macedonia. At UNHCR Headquarters, the South-Eastern Europe Operation Unit was integrated into the Bureau for Europe (effective 1 June 2001). This reconfiguration anticipates the increasing integration of many countries in the region in European institutions.

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

In **Albania**, UNHCR will focus on helping the Government to develop an effective asylum system. In addition to providing expertise on asylum legislation, UNHCR is also helping to build national capacity by training 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 that will effectively protect asylum-seekers and refugees, and address the problems of migrants and human trafficking, especially women. In 2002, UNHCR will provide humanitarian assistance for about 1,100 asylum-seekers, refugees and extremely vulnerable individuals.

BUDGET (USD)

Country	Annual Programme ¹	Supplementary Programme ²	Total
Albania	2,009,281	884,369	2,893,650
Bosnia and Herzegovina	22,352,926	0	22,352,926
Croatia	10,146,958	0	10,146,958
The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia	4,662,957	8,244,325	12,907,282
Federal Republic of Yugoslavia	48,895,637	4,655,942	53,551,579
Regional Activities	64,000	800,000	864,000
Total	88,131,759	14,584,636	102,716,395

¹ The Annual Programme includes voluntary repatriation activities in South-Eastern Europe.

² The Supplementary Programme includes international procurement for non food items.