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MAKEDONNIEN

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Please find attached UNHCR Situation Report on
the Former Yugoslavia Operation (Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia,
Federal Republic of Yugoslavia and The former Yugoslav Republic of
Macedonia).
Best regards.
(UNHCR GRNRVA)

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Since the adoption of the Program on Return by the Croatian Government, over 3,000 Croatian citizens repatriated to Croatia from FRY in organized return movements.

Between 7 and 18 December, UNHCR Belgrade, in cooperation with UNHCR Croatia, completed the first phase of a Voluntary Repatriation Information Campaign in the Kraljevo and Belgrade areas (see Croatia).

The Federal Ministry of Interior informed UNHCR that the total number of applications for citizenship received between 1 January 1997 and 18 November 1998 amounted to 188,329. Applications lodged by refugees under the revised Citizenship Law totaled 82,977 (covering over 100,000 individuals). Out of the 188,329 total, positive decisions were taken for 106,361 cases. Of this amount, the total number of refugees naturalized as FRY citizens was 42,053 (or 25,483 cases).

THE FORMER YUGOSLAV REPUBLIC OF MACEDONIA

The refugee situation in the country did not undergo dramatic changes. Several hundred refugees from Bosnia and Herzegovina were still in the country by the end of January. Unofficial estimates the number of refugees from Kosovo continued to range between 3,000 and 5,000.

The NATO Kosovo Verification Coordination Center and the Extraction Force became fully operational by mid-January with respectively 155 and 1,850 staff in place. NATO Supreme Commander General Clark traveled to FYROM on 13 January to meet the new Government and inspect NATO installations.

REGIONAL DEVELOPMENTS

Peace Implementation Council

Closely following the Humanitarian Issues Working Group Meeting of 20 November 1998, the Peace Implementation Council (PIC) held its annual ministerial level meeting in Madrid on 15 and 16 December 1998.

The PIC agreed that, after the end of the current phase devoted to consolidating peace, the next two years would be devoted to making that peace self-sustaining. Enabling a free choice on return was recognized as an essential component of this strategy. The Council resolved "to support every effort to create the conditions for a major step forward on returns to own homes in 1999 for those who wish to exercise this right."

There was wide endorsement of the RTTF 1999 Action Plan and the emphasis the plan lays on renewed and concerted efforts by OHR, SFOR and UNHCR to promote the creation of conditions conducive to minority returns. The PIC further recognized the regional dimensions of return as set out in the UNHCR Regional Strategy presented at the Luxembourg and in the reports presented to the HIWG of the Council in November.

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First Regional Meeting of International Organizations in Zagreb

On 20 January a regional coordination meeting involving OHR, OSCE and UNHCR offices in the Former Yugoslavia region was held in Zagreb in order to take into account the regional dimensions of return and promote cross-border cooperation among international organizations at the planning and operational level. The issue of cross-border return between Croatia and Bosnia and Herzegovina was one of the items high on the agenda of the meeting. It was agreed that monthly coordination meetings will take place alternating between Zagreb and Sarajevo.

Marco Roggia
Former Yugoslavia Liaison Unit
16 March 1999