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COUNCIL OF EUROPE
CONSEIL DE L'EUROPE

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Integration of refugees, displaced persons and returnees in South-Eastern Europe

Motion for a recommendation[1]
tabled by Mr Andrej ZERNOVSKI and other members of the Assembly

This motion has not been discussed in the Assembly and commits only those who have signed it

Successful integration of refugees, displaced persons and returnees is vital for political and economic stability in the region of South-Eastern Europe.

In addition to 120 000 refugees and 383 000 displaced persons who are still seeking lasting solutions, more than 100 000 people, including families with children, are expected to return to the region under agreements which were signed between the European Community and the Republic of Serbia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, "the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia" and the Republic of Montenegro, and which entered into force on 1 January 2008.

Moreover, the undecided status of Kosovo casts uncertainty and prevents displaced persons, refugees and returnees from Kosovo from reaching a decision as to whether to return to their homes or whether to settle and integrate in the area they have moved to. Resolution of the final status of Kosovo, whichever form it takes, is very likely to cause new waves of displacement.

In the current context, countries in the region face a very difficult challenge to provide the necessary conditions to resolve the situation of the remaining refugees and internally displaced persons (IDPs) and at the same time to integrate returnees, many of whom will return to the situation of secondary displacement.

In view of the above, the Parliamentary Assembly should recommend that the Committee of Ministers:

i. call on the governments in the region:

ii.
- to ensure that the necessary conditions, including clear political and financial commitment, full regional cooperation, a legal framework and relevant policies, are implemented in order to facilitate local integration of refugees, displaced persons and returnees;
- to pay particular attention to the needs and difficulties of persons belonging to a minority, in particular those who do not have a kin-state;

iii. invites the international community and, in particular, the member states of the Council of Europe and the European Union directly concerned by return programmes under the European Community agreements which were signed with the four countries in the region:

1. Referred to the Committee on Migration, Refugees and Population, for information: Reference No. 3458 (19th Sitting, 23 June 2008).

iv.
- to refrain from large-scale returns, particularly of persons from Kosovo as stated in the UNHCR's Position on the Continued International Protection Needs of Individuals from Kosovo (June 2006);
- to favour voluntary return projects over forcible returns as stated in the UNHCR's aforementioned position;
- to provide, prior to any return, technical and financial support for local development projects in order to make the return and local integration immediately possible and sustainable;

v. instructs the relevant sectors of the Council of Europe to develop further assistance programmes to facilitate integration of refugees, displaced persons and returnees in South-Eastern Europe;

vi. invites the Council of Europe Development Bank to give particular attention to projects which facilitate return, integration and employment of refugees, displaced persons and returnees in South-Eastern Europe;

vii. invites the European Union to support this process in the framework of its pre-accession funding programmes.

Signed (see overleaf)

Signed[2]*:*

ZERNOVSKI Andrej, "The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia", ALDE
BANIAS Ioannis, Greece
BANOVIĆ Donka, Serbia
BURLISON Thomas H., United Kingdom
CORREIA Telmo, Portugal, EDG
DENDIAS Nikolaos, Greece
ETHERINGTON Bill, United Kingdom
GJUL Gunn Karin, Norway
GREENWAY John, United Kingdom
HAGBERG Michael, Sweden
HAJIBAYLI Gultakin, Azerbaijan, EPP/CD
HANCOCK Mike, United Kingdom, ALDE
HENDERSON Doug, United Kingdom
KALLIO Reijo, Finland, SOC
KESKIN Hakki, Germany
NEGELE Gebhard, Liechtenstein, EPP/CD
ROSSI Alessandro, San Marino
VAKSDAL Øyvind, Norway
ZUBOVIĆ Mario, Croatia, EPP/CD

2. ALDE: Alliance of Liberals and Democrats for Europe
EDG: European Democrat Group
EPP/CD: Group of the European People's Party
SOC: Socialist Group