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Humanitarian situation of the Kosovo refugees and displaced persons

Reply to Recommendation[1]: Recommendation 1404 (1999)
Committee of Ministers

The Committee of Ministers, in reply to Parliamentary Assembly Recommendations 1403 (1999) on the crisis in Kosovo and situation in the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia and 1404 (1999) on the humanitarian situation of the Kosovo refugees and displaced persons, wishes to recall the extensive reply adopted to Parliamentary Assembly Recommendations 1397 (1999) and 1400 (1999) at the 668th meeting of the Deputies (20-22 and 27 April 1999) (Doc. 8387).

The Committee can now add the following additional information:

– The above-mentioned recommendations were transmitted to member state's governments, drawing their attention in particular to paragraph 17, points xiii and xiv, of Recommendation 1403 and to paragraph 10, point iv, of Recommendation 1404;

– Concerning the crisis in Kosovo, the Chairman of the Committee of Ministers published a declaration on the occasion of the 104th Session of the Committee of Ministers in Budapest on 7 May 1999;

– Recent developments in the Council of Europe's action since the reply to Parliamentary Recommendations 1397 (1999) and 1400 (1999) were:

As regards Recommendation 1403:

– Point 17.iii: Upon instructions from the Committee of Ministers, the Secretariat participates in preparations, together with the United Nations, OSCE and the European Commission, for the civil implementation of Resolution 1244 of the United Nations Security Council on Kosovo of 10 June 1999. A first co-ordination meeting has already taken place in Geneva, on 8 June, under the chairmanship of Mr Bildt and Mr Kukan, special envoys of the United Nations Secretary General for the Balkans. A first mission to Kosovo of Secretariat officials is currently (as from 15 June) going on within the framework of a United Nations advance team, for a needs assessment in the fields of the judiciary and local administration. Others are to follow in close co-operation with the United Nations, OSCE and the European Commission.

– Point 17.vi: At its 104th Session held in Budapest, the Committee of Ministers endorsed the Council of Europe contribution to the stability programme for south-east Europe which was appended to the Committee of Ministers' statutory report (Doc. 8362, addendum). Furthermore, the Council of Europe has actively participated and played an important role in the Bonn meeting of 27 May for the preparation of a Stability Pact for South-East Europe proposed by the German presidency of the European Union, which includes ample reference to the possible contribution by the Council of Europe.

1. Joint reply to Recommendation 1403 and Recommendation 1404 (1999), adopted by the Committee of Ministers on 15 June 1999 at the 675th meeting of the Ministers' Deputies.

It should be stressed that the Council of Europe is a full participant in this pact and the structures which will be set up in this context. The pact was adopted on 10 June in the presence of the Secretary General.

– Point 17.iv: The Council of Europe Secretariat has elaborated a proposal for a joint activity with Unicef for children with refugee and war traumas, consisting in an emergency training programme for professionals and volunteers both in Albania and in "the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia". It should be noted that the Government of Norway made a voluntary contribution of NOK 500000 for the implementation of this project. Provided the necessary conditions are met (in particular the political conditions), this programme could be extended at a later stage to the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia.

– Point 17.iv: A Council of Europe expert has visited Albania with a view to preparing an awareness-raising campaign against trafficking in female refugees from Kosovo. This mission complements the fact-finding mission on rape in armed conflict dispatched by the Parliamentary Assembly's Committee on Equal Opportunities for Women and Men from 1 to 4 June 1999. Following the expert's visit it is proposed to organise, in close co-ordination with the relevant Albanian authorities, other international organisations active in the field as well as international and national NGOs concerned with the issues, a prevention campaign among the refugee population as well as the Albanian public at large, IGOs and international and local NGOs on the issue of trafficking and education/training courses for schools, educators, social workers and counsellors, on trafficking, its consequences and on how to assist victims. In the longer term support could be given for changes in the legal field to improve protection of victims as well as the rehabilitation of women victims of trafficking.

– Point 17.ix: In the context of the general review of the legal status of all the Information and Documentation Centres, steps have been taken to reinforce the position and role of the Information Centre in Skopje, including the possibility to develop specific projects for the region.

– Point 17.x: The Council of Europe Office in Tirana has been reinforced with additional staff from headquarters in Strasbourg and outside experts. This has allowed the Office to provide support to the various delegations from the Parliamentary Assembly, the CLRAE and the Secretariat (with experts) which travelled to Albania.

– Point 17.xi: The setting up of a Council of Europe office in Pristina (and possibly other places) will be considered, when conditions permit.

– Point 17.v and vii: In 1999 financial resources for the implementation of the initial steps of the Council of Europe programme in the region will be made available by the reorientation of certain existing programmes and reallocations of resources in AD ACS (and related programmes) and by using resources under Vote XI of the Budget, which was initially foreseen for co-operation with OSCE. Contacts are underway with the EU Commission on the possible conclusion of joint projects for the region. However, full implementation of the Stability Programme will certainly require substantial additional resources possibly through extra budgetary resources.

For an overview of current and foreseen action of the Council of Europe in south-eastern Europe (in particular the situation of refugees and other victims of the conflict), the attention of the Assembly is drawn to document SG/INF (99) 7. On 4 June 1999, the Committee of Ministers' Rapporteur Group on Democratic Stability (GR-EDS) held an exchange of views with representatives of the Parliamentary Assembly, CLRAE, the Social Development Fund, the European Commission, OSCE, UNHCR, SEEC.