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CAMPAIGN 2005
A FUTURE FOR KOSOVO:
The Caritas perspective

Position Paper
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Caritas Europa is one of the seven regions of Caritas Internationalis, a confederation of 162 Catholic relief, development and social service organisations throughout the world. Caritas Europa was created in 1971 and brings together 48 organisations, which are active in 44 European countries. Caritas Europa focuses its activities on issues relating to poverty and social inequality, and issues of migration and asylum, all across the European Union as well as in the larger Europe. The organisation is strongly involved in supporting the activities of its members in the fields of international cooperation, emergency humanitarian relief and development.

1. Introduction

Since 1989 and up to now, the refugee departments of many national Caritas organisations have been in contact with persons fleeing from Kosovo.

Since June 1999, the Caritas Network has been operating a large emergency and reconstruction programme in Kosovo which is currently moving to development activities.

The Caritas Network, present in all parts of Kosovo, works with a strong commitment for poor and young people and for minority groups through peace building activities, projects in formal and informal education and community building.

This presence leads the Caritas Network to express at present a deep concern over:

- ✓ the future of Kosovo, as a safe home for all its traditional communities;
- ✓ sustainable development and durable peace for all persons, with a special commitment towards poor and excluded persons.

The unclear status¹ currently leads to frustration, tension and violence, as became obvious through the March 2004 events. All people in Kosovo long for a transparent, clear and unequivocal message from the international community about the future status of Kosovo, indicating stages, achievable conditions, timeframe and final result. Postponing this decision “*aux calendes grecques*” is irresponsible.

2. Historical background

- ✓ From the 15th century until 1912, Kosovo was part of the Ottoman Empire.
- ✓ After the Balkan wars in 1913, Kosovo was integrated into Serbia.
- ✓ In 1974, Kosovo became an autonomous province.
- ✓ In 1989, the status of autonomy was abolished.
- ✓ In 1998, NATO intervened by force and since 1999 Kosovo has been under UN administration (UNMIK) following the resolution 1244 of the United Nations Security Council.

¹ Caritas, as an international humanitarian association will not take position on which kind of status should be granted to Kosovo, but, in collaboration with the University of Saarbrücken, will present in early 2005 a complementary document, based on a comprehensive research on the different models proposed, analyzing their advantages and disadvantages.

3. Current situation

Kosovo has an estimated population of 2 million and an area of 10,887 km² and has thus a high population density (190 inhabitants/km²).²

63% of the population in Kosovo is under 30 years old.

There is no reliable statistical data on the current ethnic structure and religious origin of the population of Kosovo. The last census taken in the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia in 1991, boycotted by many Kosovo Albanians, showed that out of 1,954,747 Kosovo inhabitants, 82.2 % were Albanians, 10.0 % Serbs and 7.8 % Roma, Ashkali, Egyptians, Gorani, Bosniaks, Turks and Croats.

An estimated 90 per cent of the population in Kosovo are Muslims, the rest are Christian Orthodox and there is also a small Catholic community.

The average household size is 6.52 persons with an average of 2.08 children.

Living conditions³

50.35% of the population is living under the national poverty line and 12.71% under the national extreme poverty line.

Following the war of 1998/99 many persons left the villages and settled in the cities; 25% of the population lives in Pristina. This urbanisation goes along with an uncontrolled use of space and land. Access to many villages, especially in the mountains is difficult, due to a lack of proper infrastructure.

Life expectation is 68.86 years.⁴

Infant mortality rate is 5.78%.⁵

In Kosovo, the situation of public service is very unsatisfactory:

- ✓ 27.41% of persons are without access to safe source of drinking water;
- ✓ 33.24 % have no sewerage for disposal of waste water;
- ✓ 98.76% of the population has access to electricity, but all suffer from current shortages of electricity.

Uncontrolled privatisation trends in the field of health services, transport and other public services makes their access more and more difficult for the poor.

² Luxemburg has a population density of 173 inhabitants/km².

³ Source of the figures: the UNDP Human Development Report on Kosovo 2004.

⁴ 10 years more in Luxemburg.

⁵ 10 times less in Luxemburg.

4. Major concerns

Education

Kosovo's main resource is young people: 50% of the population is less than 20 years old. In 2002/2003, 95.44% of children attended primary school, 75.20 % went to secondary school and 5% to institutes of higher education.⁶ Among the adult population, the illiteracy rate is 5.78%. 1.65% studied at University.

Children go to primary schools in 3 or even 4 shifts due to a lack of appropriate infrastructure. Secondary and high schools offer mostly theoretic knowledge and miss equipped laboratories. Without practice at school, a smooth transition from school to professional life is not guaranteed. Moreover, statistics show that half of the unemployed persons register as unqualified workers.

Only 70% of girls continue secondary education after primary school.

Every year approximately 23,000 young persons leave secondary school, but only around 6,000 have access to University.

Currently the lack of understanding of either Albanian or Serbian leads de facto to separation, tension and misunderstanding

Kosovo has an urgent need for:

- ✓ investment in school infrastructures;
- ✓ modernisation of the educational system with new educational curricula, promoting ethical values, concern for the common good, human rights, civism, tolerance and respect for all⁷;
- ✓ priority to vocational training;
- ✓ transparent access to higher education;
- ✓ possibilities for higher education abroad, through partner-and sponsorship of European universities and institutions;
- ✓ special support for girls in secondary and tertiary education;
- ✓ active learning of both the Albanian and Serbian language by all children, to create a basis for understanding and communication.

Economical development

According to an opinion survey, for 65 % of people the lack of job opportunities is the first problem Kosovo has to face. The 2004 UNDP figures show that 44.42 % of the 1.2 million persons aged between 18 and 65 years are unemployed (38.47 % men and 58.06 % women).

The annual per capita income is 1,053.23 US\$; the share of the poorest 20% is 6.52 % and the share of the richest 20% is 43.39%. 18.84% of households have no economic assets.

Kosovo's economy by sectors shows that 15% is industry, 60% trade & services and 25% agriculture.

⁶ According to SOK, social statistics: higher education in Kosovo 2003.

⁷ Particular care is needed to work on history school textbooks to explain historical realities from different points of views.

The main economical problems can be summarised as follows:

- ✓ declining numbers of young people active in the agricultural sector;
- ✓ very small parcels in family property;
- ✓ unsolved private ownership questions;
- ✓ slow privatisation process of socially owned enterprises;
- ✓ current credit system favouring short-term investment, mainly in trade and construction;
- ✓ uncertain political environment, discouraging long-term and foreign investment;
- ✓ declining donor support;
- ✓ insufficient level of infrastructure development;
- ✓ forced return of refugees.

A further decrease in economic growth has to be expected.

There's an *urgent need* for rapid progress in the economic field if one wants to avoid an even greater pauperization of the population. The first goal of economic development is to cover the basic needs of the whole population and once this goal has been fulfilled, the next step is to move Kosovo towards reaching European economical standards. This has to be achieved by setting up a comprehensive development plan based on:

- ✓ local resources: wo-manpower, mineral resources, energy and agro-business;
- ✓ foreign support: technical assistance and capacity-building by highly qualified and honest persons, access to long term credits, facilitation of exports of goods and further effective foreign investment in general infrastructure.

The European Commission is urged to show a greater implication in the setting up and implementing of an economic development plan, with the first aim of covering basic needs of the population. Labour emigration to Western European countries should be allowed as a short term measure to fight against poverty.

Freedom of movement and security

Currently Kosovo is divided; the existence of enclaves and of Mitrovica, as a divided city, is an intolerable situation. The mutual fear and mistrust is overall present and has its roots in near and far-reaching traumatic experiences of the past.

One of the major concerns is the security of minorities and most of all of the Serbian population. Around 100,000 Serbs remain currently in Kosovo.

Problems like non prosecuted crimes committed during the war and in March 2004, thousands of missing persons since 1998/99 and insufficient fight against other violations of law nourishes the feelings of insecurity in general and specifically amongst minorities.

At present, security and minority protection continue to be international "reserve powers" of the UN administration which are not foreseen to be transferred at present to local institutions. The multiplicity of origin amongst the UNMIK police and their short term mandates do not contribute to effective interventions, to confidence building, or to easy understanding.

Before speaking about tolerance and mutual respect, urgent and more effective action has to be undertaken by security institutions to establish the rule of law. Criminals have to be prosecuted and

punished. Only when justice and truth prevail, a climate of peaceful coexistence, of tolerance and respect and hopefully of reconciliation can grow.

Experiences from elsewhere in the Balkans have shown that security only improves once local institutions have been given direct political responsibility, rather than being bypassed by international institutions. Responsibility in the field of security has to be given to local institutions as well as the necessary means which allows them to do their job properly.

Just and open society

Kosovo is currently a society on the move between a clan-oriented behaviour and a confused legal framework.⁸ The traditional law codex “Kanun” with its *law called Talion* is not implemented anymore but still remains an important mental reference; a modern legal framework still has to prove its effectiveness.

Rediscovering values of the traditional society and adapting them for the present time is an important task for the leading authorities and a chance for fighting against corruption or promoting respect of property rights.

The important role of NGOs has to be recognized not only because of their grass-root-initiatives, but also for their views, analyses, proposals and recommendations for structural changes within Kosovo society.

Religious authorities are invited to overcome past divisions, to promote ethical values, to initiate and facilitate dialogue beyond their own communities and, if needed, to protect together sacred space.

Kosovo's future has to be seen in a regional context: To facilitate cross-border initiatives there is an urgent need to enlarge travel possibilities for all Kosovars, in order to give them access to all their neighbouring countries⁹ and to European Union territory:

- ✓ for legal season labour emigration and
- ✓ for short-term participation in European-wide NGO initiatives

This should be supported by European funding systems.

Governing bodies

The progressive transfer of competences from UNMIK to the Kosovo Provisional Institutions of Self Government (PISG) creates a current situation in which nobody knows exactly how the responsibilities are divided.

Representation of the minority groups on national (PISG) and local (municipality) level is seen by those concerned as an alibi function without real influence and leads to participation refusal.

There is a *need* for further, clear and publicly known competence transfer from UN to Kosovo institutions so as to create a climate of ownership, responsibility and accountability with a clear time framework. UN bodies should remain present with high qualified personnel, fulfilling the tasks of capacity building, technical assistance and monitoring.

⁸ A multitude of contradictory laws established during the different periods of the past 20 years co-exist .

⁹ Especially all countries from the former FRY.

5. Commitment of the Caritas Europa network

In Kosovo:

- ✓ field work through a multi-ethnic staff;
- ✓ implementation of projects according to the needs of the poorest and of the young generation's education and formation;
- ✓ promotion of interethnic and inter-religious dialogue and respect of differences in all activities undertaken.

In Europe:

- ✓ support of Caritas-Kosovo by the Caritas Network;
- ✓ special lobbying activities and self-commitment by Caritas-member organizations for a sustainable development in Kosovo.

6. Recommendations

To the European Union Institutions (including Parliament, Commission, Council, and Presidency) and Member States of the "Contact Group for Kosovo":¹⁰

1. To put Kosovo as a high priority on the political agenda of all European Institutions.
2. To take a leading role in
 - ✓ evaluating resolution 1244;
 - ✓ fixing together, urgently and publicly, the political roadmap for dealing with the future status, with the participation of Kosovo authorities and representatives of civil society.
3. To decide on a better support for Kosovo's education system by the European Commission.
4. To promote European investments and decide upon an increased European public funding of Kosovo economic development.

This document was approved by the Caritas Europa Executive Board on 15 December 2004.

¹⁰ The "Contact Group for Kosovo" comprises Britain, France, Germany, Italy, Russia and the United States. This informal grouping of countries focused regularly on the developing situation in Kosovo and supervises international policy.