

**THE UNION FOR SUSTAINABLE RETURN AND INTEGRATIONS IN BOSNIA AND
HERZEGOVINA (USRIBH)**

(Special Consultative Status granted in 1997)

**Quadrennial Report 2005 – 2008 to the Committee
on Non-Governmental Organizations
United Nations Economic and Social Council**

PART I – INTRODUCTION

i. Founded in 1993, the Union for Sustainable Return and Integrations in Bosnia and Herzegovina (USRIBH) is multi-ethnic and non-governmental organization that serves as an umbrella network linking associations of returnees, associations of women, farmers associations, agricultural and other return-related NGOs in Bosnia and Herzegovina. Under the former name “Association for refugees and displaced persons of Bosnia and Herzegovina (ARDP)”, the Union was one of the largest multi-ethnic organizations that worked in all conflict areas of the country. Now, comprised of 98 local grassroots refugees return - related NGOs, the main task of the Union is protection of refugees, displaced persons and returnees in their basic human rights – return to their pre-war homes, right to their property, right for education and insurance, fight against ethnic discrimination in areas where refugees return and other crimes against humanity. The Union promotes civil society initiatives and strengthens civil society status in the areas where refugees return, through cooperation with local authorities and government institutions in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

The Winners of Award for Peace (The International League of Humanists, 2004) and Heroes for Human Rights (International Crisis Group, 1998), the Union is also an associate member at European Citizen Action Service (ECAS), with an aim to promote of returnees’ rights and making their voice heard with the European Union.

ii. In 2009 the Union was faced with its second pre-registration by the Ministry for justice of Bosnia and Herzegovina, since the focus of the needs related to refugees and returnees have been replaced from urgent needs and reconstruction to employment, economic issues and social integrations of the returnees. Continuing with its program activities, the Union has changed its name “The Union of Associations for refugees, displaced persons and returnees in

Bosnia and Herzegovina“(UARDP) into “**The Union for Sustainable Return and Integrations in Bosnia and Herzegovina**” (USRIBH).

PART II – CONTRIBUTION OF THE ORGANISATION TO THE WORK OF THE UNITED NATIONS

i. Participation in the work of the Economic and Social Council and its subsidiary bodies, major conferences and other United Nations meetings

The Union was able to facilitate the participation of its representative during the reporting period within the following United Nations meetings:

- Geneva, Switzerland, 17 – 25 February 2005, 2nd Meeting of the preparatory Committee (PreCom -2) of the Tunis Phase of WSIS, Palais des Nations, Geneva, and
- Geneva, Switzerland, 5 - 7 December 2007, 23rd CONGO General Assembly, Palais des Nations, Geneva.

Based on financial limitations, the Union is not able to facilitate the participation of its representatives in the work of the Economic and Social Council and its subsidiary bodies, major conferences and other United Nations meetings, but we are regularly informed about the meetings and their main topics. Within the scope of received invitations and agendas, the Union realizes similar activities on regional level as well as on state level. Based on invitation-letter for 50th Session of the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) that was held from 27 February to 10 March 2006 and caused on impossibility of the Union to participate on this Session, the Union has organized regional Conference with the topic “Employment and presence of returnees women in local authority and public sector” that was held in Banja Luka (Bosnia and Herzegovina).

ii. Cooperation with the United Nations bodies and/or specialized agencies in the field and/or at Headquarters.

During the reporting period 2005 – 2008, the Union implemented several projects in cooperation and financially supported by the following specialized agencies:

- United States Agency for International Development (USAID)
- Danish Refugee Council (DRC) - one of the largest Danish humanitarian agencies that implements activities in support of people affected by conflict.
- Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC) - the international cooperation agency of Switzerland responsible for the overall coordination of development activities

and cooperation with Eastern Europe, as well as for the humanitarian aid delivered by the Swiss Confederation.

- Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (SIDA)
- Arbeiter - Samariter-Bund e. V. Germany (ASB) - an international German aid and welfare organization.
- See Ran - a network of domestic refugee aid organizations in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Montenegro, Serbia, Kosovo, Albania and Macedonia.

Good cooperation has been established with the following specialized agencies presented in Bosnia and Herzegovina:

- The United Nations Refugees Agency (UNHCR) – Representation in Bosnia and Herzegovina
- The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) in Bosnia and Herzegovina
- Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) in Bosnia and Herzegovina
- International Organization for Migration (IOM)
- CARE International - one of the largest international relief and humanitarian organizations in the world, with programs in nearly 70 countries

iii. Initiatives undertaken by the organization in support of internationally agreed development goals, in particular, the Millennium Development Goals, which now form the basis of the global agenda for the 21st century.

Activities in line with the Millennium Development Goals

▪ Goal 1. Eradicate extreme poverty and hunger

Financially supported by USAID and Center for Civil Initiatives (Bosnia-Herzegovina), the Union has implemented one-year campaign “Creation of sustainable model supporting poverty reduction in Bosnia-Herzegovina” (2007-2008). Through public advocacy, the Union required from higher level of authority to change the current laws in order to combat extreme hunger and poverty. In this sense, the Union suggested three models for poverty reduction: 1. Creation of the Fond for social development of underdeveloped areas; 2. Form an Agency for trainings and employment programs; and 3. Initiation of the Institute of social (state) pension for extreme vulnerable persons older then 65. The campaign included informing of **40.000** displaced persons and returnees on how to be included in current economic programs.

- Goal 3. Promote Gender Equality and Empower Women

MDG 3 was the focus of the Unions activities within the realization of the project that include mentoring and empowerment of refugee women. Supports for this goal include the assistance for over **400 refugee women** to be employed in private and public sector in both entities of Bosnia and Herzegovina, advocating for refugee women rights as well as helping them to integrate into society. Report about the current situation in the field of employment of refugee woman has been presented to media. The Unions survey shows shocking fact that just 1% of the refugees are actually employed.

- Goal 7. Ensure environmental sustainability:

Within the MDG 7 and its Target 10 (“Halve the proportion of people without sustainable access to safe drinking water and sanitation”), the Union with its member-organizations contributed for reconnection of **1.600** houses to water, sewage and/or electricity networks. With a help of long-year campaign, the Union contribute for reconstruction of **237 refugee houses/apartments** in city Mostar that will be finally reconstructed in next year.

Activities in Support of Global Principles

The United Nations General Assembly designated 20 June 2000 as World Refugee Day to recognize and celebrate the contribution of refugees throughout the world. Since then, on this day the Union organizes variety events:

- Organized visits to returnees, collective centers, podium-discussions, printing promotive materials related to the World Refugee Day, actions of humanitarian assistance. All actions related to this day are recorded by media. On the end of the Day, official press release is published.
- Commemorate World Refugee Day though different podium-discussions that inform the public in Bosnia and Herzegovina about the aims of world poverty reduction and Millennium Development Goals.

To mark the International Human Rights Day on 10 December every year, the Union organizes roundtable Bosnia and Herzegovina, where local associations - members of Union- give a report about current situation from the field and human rights violations. Conclusions and official statement are sent to all public media in Bosnia and Herzegovina. Flyers and brochures about based human rights of the returnees are distributed over the country.

UPDATED CONTACT INFORMATION

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