

# Press Release

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## World Refugee Day: PACE President calls for 'durable solutions for the most vulnerable of the vulnerable' in the Balkans

Strasbourg, 19.06.2007 – On the eve of World Refugee Day, René van der Linden, President of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe (PACE), has swung the spotlight back onto refugees and displaced persons in the Balkans and the need to find durable solutions for them.

"Twelve years after the war in Bosnia and Herzegovina and Croatia, and eight years after the armed conflict in Kosovo, over half a million refugees and displaced persons still remain in the Balkans," he said. "These are the most vulnerable of the vulnerable. They are the elderly without family support, they are the traumatised survivors of atrocities, they are the sick and disabled, single mothers, people from national minorities or those in need of witness protection. They have largely been forgotten and neglected as local resources and international humanitarian aid has dried up and new refugee situations across the globe have taken the spotlight."

Mr van der Linden drew attention to a [report on refugees and displaced persons from the Balkans](#) to be discussed in the Assembly on 27 June 2007. "The aim of this report is to remind governments in the Balkans of their responsibilities towards refugees and displaced persons.. International human rights instruments must be implemented, special protection has to be provided to national minorities, the process of reconciliation needs to be vigorously pursued, perpetrators of war crimes and inter-ethnic violence have to be prosecuted and administrative, judicial and police reforms must be carried out to create the conditions for voluntary return in safety and dignity."

"World Refugee Day 2007," he concluded, "is a good moment to remind ourselves that it is in the interest of the whole of Europe to assist the Balkan region to resolve the questions of the past and to offer a European perspective for a prosperous and peaceful future."

The Parliamentary Assembly brings together 318 members from the national parliaments of the 47 member states.

President: René van der Linden (Netherlands, EPP/CD); Secretary General of the Assembly: Mateo Sorinas.

Political Groups: SOC (Socialist Group); EPP/CD (Group of the European People's Party); ALDE (Alliance of Liberals and Democrats for Europe); EDG (European Democratic Group); UEL (Group of the Unified European Left).