

## SRSB Meets Civil Society Five Days into His Mandate

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### UPCOMING EVENTS

GOTV Campaign.....  
.....ongoing

**Write to us with you upcoming events and we will advertise them in "The Advocate"!**

Just five days into his mandate, the newly-appointed Special Representative of the Secretary General (SRSB), Mr. Søren Jessen-Petersen, met with Kosovo civil society representatives. This meeting provided an impression of openness for the United Nations Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK), following numerous allegations of the administration's lack of accountability and transparency towards the people of Kosovo.

The meeting was held on August 20, 2004, following a recommendation of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) Mission in Kosovo (OMIK) Democratization Department. Eleven representatives from Kosovo's biggest and most active NGOs and five UNMIK representatives, including Mr. Pascal Fieschi (the head of OMIK) were present at the meeting.

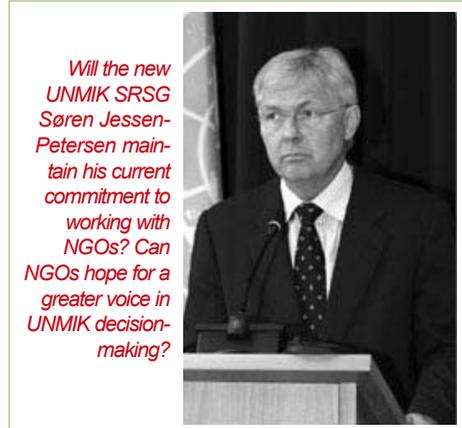
At the meeting, Mr. Petersen emphasized what he saw as the most important issues and challenges Kosovo faced during his mandate. The issues mentioned were: Development of Democratic Governmental Institutions;

Security; Standards; Decentralization; and, Economy. Mr. Petersen also mentioned that there should be no date set for the status of Kosovo.

"He seemed to be a very concrete and pragmatic person" Amir Haxhikadria, a Kosovo Youth Council representative at the meeting, said. "Mr. Petersen comes from civil society himself and therefore, it looks like he has faith in it," Haxhikadria continued.

Civil society representatives at the meeting described their organizations' work and stressed their concerns regarding Kosovo's situation. They provided suggestions as to what UNMIK could do to improve the situation.

Participants stressed the importance of UNMIK's accountability to the people of Kosovo. ATRC representative Kreshnik Berisha specifically mentioned the importance a Freedom of Information Act could have, if UNMIK were to



*Will the new UNMIK SRSB Søren Jessen-Petersen maintain his current commitment to working with NGOs? Can NGOs hope for a greater voice in UNMIK decision-making?*

approve such a regulation that would be applicable to its own governing structures.

Transfer of powers from UNMIK was also mentioned as a necessity for Kosovo to move forward in the democratization process.

Those present underlined the importance of dialogue between civil society and UNMIK and proposed that meetings of this sort be held every three months.

Whether this is a one-off gesture of good will from the head of UNMIK or the first step in a better relationship between the civil society and international administration in Kosovo, we will know in the coming months. ■

## NGO Coalition Plans to Get Out the Vote

**Sept. 2, Prishtina.** Nearly twenty NGO representatives gathered at ATRC to discuss a seven week Get Out the Vote (GOTV) advocacy campaign that would increase the number of citizens who vote in the October 2004 elections.

The three-pronged project would include an intensive information program that would improve citizens' knowledge as to why voting in this election is important; training by experienced trainers that would build the capacity of citizens, civil society, and civic groups for canvassing;

and, canvassing that would result in a well-organized Kosovo-wide advocacy network that links citizen volun-

teers with NGOs and civic groups.

In the current atmosphere where international and local government are entrenched in a fight over power, competencies, and Kosovo's future status, citizens' real needs have been left behind. Kosovo's unique governing system makes it difficult for citizens to know where to address their issues or who to hold responsible. This has led to a general frustration that will most likely contribute to low voter turnout in Kosovo's October



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## SFERA Assesses Media and March Violence

The SFERA institute undertook an initiative to write a full report on the role and function of all decision-makers in Kosovo in relation to the March events. More specifically, SFERA is monitoring and evaluating the newspapers' performance.

SFERA is currently analyzing the print media's coverage of events related to the March violence for February - June. The project will also analyze published reports following the March events and compare analyses of these events with similar events elsewhere.

"The March events can serve as a referal point: a history exists before the events and a history will be created after. As such, society is obliged to analyze what happened." SFERA Director Ulpiana Lama said.

The methods used vary, but include both quantitative and qualitative analysis, which is illustrated by a graphic overview of data.

"Our goal as an institute is not to judge or prejudge the work of institutions. We aim to provide an impartial analysis in compliance with contemporary methodology." Ulpiana Lama continued.

Target medias that comply with international standards are believed to have the most influence over opinion. These include, for example, the daily newspapers Koha Ditore, Zëri, Epoka e Re, Kosova Sot and Bota Sot.

The final report will be published in October and publicly presented with all interested entities invited to participate.

FDI is supporting this project.

## Civil Society, Government, UN Join to Fight Corruption

**Aug. 31, Grand Hotel, Prishtina.** The Prime Minister's Advisory Office for Good Governance and its partners launched an anti-corruption campaign emphasizing the role of both government leaders and ordinary citizens in the fight against corruption. The campaign is one aspect of the multi-faceted approach to fighting corruption recommended in a new report sponsored by the Provisional Institutions of Self-Government (PISG) and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP).

The campaign will be led by a task force under the leadership of the Prime Minister's Advisory Office for Good Governance and a civil society co-chair. The task force, which has already held several meetings,

represents an unprecedented level of collaboration among various actors with a stake in fighting corruption in Kosovo, including leaders within the government and civil society.

Civil society, government and UNDP representatives have all stressed the importance of their cooperation in combating corruption. They also agreed that this will be a long-term, ongoing effort.

"There is no magic bullet that can lead to overnight solutions," Richard Ponzio, UNDP Kosovo Democratic Governance Team Leader said.

Ponzio highlighted the role that civil society can play in the



Richard Ponzio - UNDP, Rozeta Shembilku (moderator), Habit Hajredeni - Advisory Office for Good Governance and Igballe Rogova - Kosovo Women's Network discussed the anti-corruption campaign.

campaign. "The involvement of civil society, the media and business companies, must be substantial and visible in order to achieve success."

As part of the campaign, they released a report analyzing the 1,136 Kosovars' perceptions of corruption in various public institutions, entitled "Combating Corruption in Kosovo." The report evaluates the public's understanding of corruption and its causes. Based on these findings and experience from the rest of the Balkans and beyond, the report presents a range of recommendations in the areas of prevention, enforcement, public awareness, and addressing root causes. The report and more information are available at ATRC. ■

### Key Recommendations:

#### "Combating Corruption in Kosovo Citizens Survey"

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| <p><b>Prevention</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Prompt passage and implementation of the Kosovo Anti-Corruption Strategy by the Assembly;</li> <li>• Establish a task force to design and help lead an anti-corruption campaign;</li> <li>• Build capacity in the PISG; Improve financial management/oversight;</li> <li>• Streamline procedures within the PISG and UNMIK; and,</li> <li>• Increase political party transparency.</li> </ul> | <p><b>Public Awareness</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Hold forums in the municipalities to facilitate the creation of local anti-corruption action plans</li> <li>• Organize debates on corruption in the run-up to the elections</li> <li>• Collect and distribute accurate data;</li> <li>• Conduct public outreach to increase the PISG's legitimacy in the Kosovo Serb community; and,</li> <li>• Integrate civic education into curricula.</li> </ul> |
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## MADIS Advocates for Protecting Children of All Ethnicities

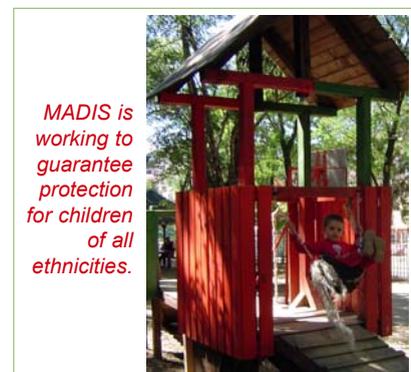
MADIS, a Bosnian NGO in Peja, has worked to protect children of all ethnicities that were abandoned and in need of social protection. Most of these children lost one or both of their parents in Kosovo's last conflict. Some of them are mentally disabled, and the best people to be close to them in absence of their parents are family psychology staff, according to MADIS representatives.

"We think that all socially endangered and abandoned children, regardless of whether or not they have both parents, should be under tutorship of the Ministry of Labor and Social Protection," family medical doctor

Reshad Pejčinović said.

MADIS has recommended to the ministry that this social category enjoy protected status until they become 18 years old. According to the international declaration on children's rights, article 20, the state is obliged to ensure a special protection for children deprived of parental care. This includes ensuring a living standard that matches with their physical, mental, spiritual, moral and social development.

"A healthy society creates conditions for children, contributing to their overall,



MADIS is working to guarantee protection for children of all ethnicities.

normal development" a MADIS representative said.

MADIS named this project "Save the Children". It is funded by FDI in Gjakova.

"Children want to play and live" and "children cannot be hungry, abandoned, and maltreated" are two slogans that characterize the project. ■

## Slovaks, Kosovars Share Experiences

**Sept. 8, Prishtina.** Kosovar and Slovak NGOs met at ARTC to discuss the Slovak experience with anti-corruption and NGO sustainability.

“We can gain a lot from Slovak experience in anti-corruption,” Bashkim Rrahmani, FDI Executive Director said. FDI has cooperated with Slovak NGOs for three years.

Much of the discussion surrounded the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA), which both Kosovar and Slovak NGOs have successfully advocated for and passed. However, in neither case was implementation easy. The Slovak delegation of seven provided some suggestions for structuring FOIA implementation:

- 1) Monitoring local, central and regional government institutions;
- 2) Advocating, including strategic litigation; and,
- 3) Educating both public and governmental officials.

They recommended that Kosovars NGOs begin by educating the public and gaining their support in assuring local and central authorities’ compliance. Afterward NGOs should act as watchdogs to ensure its full implementation. In the Slovak case, a combination of investigative journalism, strategic litigation and informative campaigns to disseminate conclusions led to success. For example, this resulted in a corrupt minister losing his post.

Kosovar NGOs could also learn from the Slovak experience in financial sustainability. While Kosovar NGOs currently gain financial support from foreign sources, Slovaks pointed out that it will not continue forever. In their experience, few NGOs survived after foreign financial support was withdrawn and local funding became crucial. Considering that Kosovo’s situation could be the same in a few years, NGOs should start looking for local funding. Anti-corruption campaigns, for example, could gain significant local support, as in Slovakia. ■

## Citizens’ League Drafts Strategic Plan for Peja

Like many Kosovar municipalities, Peja lacks a strategic plan. The absence of a plan has slowed progress and made the municipality’s development very difficult.

The Citizens’ League of Peja has gathered experts to draft a strategic plan for Peja municipality. They hope to raise awareness among institutions and the community that Peja cannot undergo sustainable development without a strategic plan.

“One of our top priorities in realizing this project is a twenty-year-old plan to build a tourist sports center in Rugova Canyon as a foundation for sustainable economic development and new jobs.” Reshat Nurboja, Executive Director of the Citizens’ League said.

Through the strategic plan’s development process, the Citizens’ League also

aims to enhance discussion between institutions and citizens on how they view the city’s development.

To date, an experts group has compiled a draft plan, which was sent to civil society and stakeholders for review. The plan involves components from all segments of life such as urban planning, anti-corruption, electoral process (open lists), etc.

The Citizens’ League hopes that municipal institutions will begin with implementation or at least incorporate the proposed strategic plan in the assembly’s agenda. Through this project, the Citizens’ League has already successfully con-

*By establishing a strategic plan, Peja municipality could better approach issues such as urban planning.*



vinced institutional bodies to think about establishing working groups to draft a strategic plan at the local level.

The UN-Habitat cooperated with the municipalities in a similar project, but it proved unsuccessful. ■

## Club Creates Better Conditions for Businesses

The Businesspeople’s Club in Prizren has initiated an advocacy campaign to change the procedures for registering businesses in Kosovo. If passed, this regulation will make registration processes more accessible for local businesses.

Initially, municipal offices for business registration existed, but the Ministry of Trade and Industry decided that these offices might create a space for corrupt practices. Therefore they decided to centralize power. Regulation 2001/6

currently states that all new businesses should be registered in Prishtina in a special unit within the Ministry of Trade and Industry.

Now, using examples of policies in foreign countries, the Businesspeople’s Club plans to establish either municipal units or five regional centers in Kosovo for business registration.

“Political decision-making should serve the interests of specific stakeholders,” Ymer Berisha from the Businesspeople’s Club said, explaining the need for decision-makers to open business registration units that are more accessible for business people.

Through public discussions and debates that involved stakeholders from the political, administrative, economic

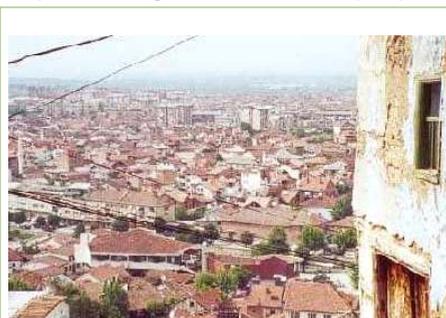
and legislative sectors as well as UNMIK, the club has worked to refine the procedures. The resulting document will be submitted to decision-makers as a basis for revising or drafting a new regulation.

After surveying approximately 100 business owners regarding procedures of registration, the club found that 90% of those interviewed were in favor of the proposed changes.

If the process follows other regional countries’ practices, the process should have three components:

1. Democratization of political decision-making;
2. Decentralization of administrative power; and
3. Strengthening of the business community’s role in political and administrative decision-making.

The Businesspeople’s Club is an NGO that protects the interests of businesspeople in Prizren municipality. ■



*The Businesspeople’s Club attempts to facilitate the modernization process in Prizren.*

**atrc**

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this issue of "The Advocate"?  
Please share your thoughts on  
what you like and what you'd  
like to see improved by writing to  
info@advocacy-center.org.*

## Get Out The Vote Campaign, Continued

2004 elections. At the same time, with Kosovo's final political status set to be decided in the next three years, this election is key to the protectorate's democratic future.

Thus, ATRC seeks to involve a broad coalition of partners that will work in a program for Kosovars, by Kosovars, to get out the vote. Together this coalition will develop a unified message to deliver to the population regarding the importance of voting.

This message will be delivered firstly through an information campaign that involves pamphlets, posters, and public announcements for electronic media. Live television debates with prominent community leaders on local television and radio shows will be key to spreading the message throughout Kosovo. Kosova Women's Network, which has a great deal of experience in working

with local media, has agreed to take a lead in this work.

Secondly, ATRC and NDI will cooperate to administer 111 specialized trainings for volunteers on how to canvass and relay the appropriate GOTV message to citizens. Then, ATRC will act as a central resource center for supporting 30 municipal coordinators in actively involving 2,789 volunteers in reaching approximately 335,000 households throughout Kosovo with the GOTV message. This door-to-door campaign will allow volunteers to interact directly with citizens and to deliver literature explaining the importance of voting.

ATRC will record the activities and results of the GOTV campaign and use the experience as "lessons learned" for future large-scale advocacy campaigns in Kosovo and the region. Additional byproducts of the GOTV campaign will in-



clude: a volunteer database; a more formal advocacy network; learned large-scale advocacy techniques; and available materials for canvassing. The campaign will also contribute to improved NGO/citizen relations, which could help NGOs more easily recruit volunteers and communicate with citizens for future work.

If you require any more information about GOTV or would like to become a partner, please do not hesitate to contact ATRC. ■

Guest Article: from OSCE

## Civil Dialogue Project Brings Brings Regional NGOs Together

After 1998 and 1999, almost all connections between NGOs from Kosovo and Serbia were severed. The Civil Dialogue Project, initiated by OSCE/Democratization Department, the "Centre for Regionalism" from Novi Sad and "Mother Theresa Society" from Pristina in June 2002, seeks to restore these connections.

NGOs and civil society can contribute to normalizing affairs and relations in Kosovo and the region, as well as in removing psychological barriers created as a result of past events. Furthermore, as the Balkans share the same geographical and cultural environment, NGOs need to cooperate regardless of Kosovo's final legal status.

The Civil Dialogue project has included several meetings, including a "Civil Dialogue - First Step" conference in Palic

(Vojvodina), meeting of Youth NGOs and a meeting of media representatives from Kosovo and Serbia proper.

The Civil Dialogue Project had its annual conference in Pristina on June 30, 2004. The conference explored how to support democracy and dialogue on the ground by engaging youth, women and the media. This included discussing the challenges to respecting diversity and discourse within these groups. In addition, there were suggestions on how to include other elements of civil society in the dialogue process.

In May 2004, the Civil Dialogue Project launched a Small Grants Program supported by the Rockefeller Brothers Fund. The Small Grants Program seeks to encourage youth, women and

media organizations in Kosovo and Serbia to more consistently and systematically develop partnerships and pursue joint activities on a long-term basis. Contributing to long-term development of cooperation between the media and NGOs in Serbia and Kosovo, these small grants are intended to promote and foster dialogue and encourage cross-sector initiatives.

Specifically, the goals of the Small Grants Program are:

- To intensify and mobilize two-way communication and dialogue between youth, women and media organizations
  - To support organizations that pursue inter-ethnic, cross-sector and regional initiatives; and,
  - To strategically focus on improving understanding and promoting tolerance and stability in the region.
- The project will continue through 2005. ■