

New Majorities and Minorities in the Western Balkans

The prospects for peace and stability in the Western Balkans will be strongly influenced by the approaching decision on the final status of Kosovo. Bearing this in mind, the Project on Ethnic Relations convened its eighth regional high-level roundtable discussion on interethnic relations of political leaders from Southeast Europe on December 2-3, 2006 in Budapest, Hungary. The roundtable titled *New Majorities and Minorities in the Changing Balkans* assembled senior political leaders, decision-makers and officials from the region, the U.S. State Department, the European Union, the Council of Europe, and the OSCE to discuss interethnic relations in the region as the international community prepares to resolve the issue of Kosovo's status. The roundtable was organized by PER in cooperation with the Hungarian Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Previous roundtables in this series took place in Budapest, Athens, Lucerne, and Bucharest during 2000-2006.

It is expected that in the first half of 2007 the international community will decide on how to settle the status of Kosovo. Kosovo has been waiting for a resolution of its status since the end of the war there in 1999, and the expected

continued on page 8

Improving Interethnic Confidence in Kosovo

Albanian-Serb Dialogue

Last year marked a historic turning point for Kosovo. In November 2005, the UN Secretary General launched a process led by former Finnish President Martti Ahtisaari to determine Kosovo's future status. In support of negotiations, and upon consultation with Kosovo Albanian and Serb leaders, President Ahtisaari, U.S. and West European diplomats, PER launched a new initiative titled *Confidence Building Measures in Kosovo*.

The purpose of the initiative is to facilitate dialogue among a range of actors in various interethnic municipalities to seek solutions to concrete problems, in the hopes that these solutions would produce immediate results and contribute towards improving overall interethnic relations in Kosovo.

PER began the initiative in June 2006 with two roundtables for different factions of Kosovo Serb leaders held in Mitrovica and follow-up consultations with Kosovo Albanian leaders to identify problems of a practical nature that could be resolved while status talks are going on. During these meetings both Albanians and Serbs emphasized the need to continue informal discussions. Acting on their

continued on page 8



From left to right: Jozefina Topalli, Speaker of the Albanian Parliament, Kinga Goncz, Minister of Foreign Affairs of Hungary, Livia Plaks, President of the Project on Ethnic Relations, and Gabriela Konevska Trajkovska, Deputy Prime Minister of Macedonia.



From left to right: Hashim Thaci, President of Democratic Party of Kosova, Veton Surroi, Leader of the Reform Party ORA, Randjel Nojkic, Head of the Parliamentary group of the Serb List for Kosovo and Metohija in the Kosovo Assembly, Skender Hyseni, Principal Political Advisor to the President of Kosovo, Alex Grigor'ev, Director for Western Balkans of the Project on Ethnic Relations.

INSIDE

<i>President's Report</i>	2
<i>Macedonia's Euro-Atlantic Integration</i>	3
<i>Montenegro to Establish Minority Councils</i>	3
<i>PER Concludes "Serbs in the 21st Century" Initiative</i>	4
<i>Reviving Interethnic Dialogue in Serbia</i>	4
<i>PER Visits Georgia</i>	5
<i>Montenegro to Develop a Government Roma Strategy</i>	5
<i>PER Regional Center for Central, Eastern, and Southeastern Europe</i>	6
<i>PER Announcements</i>	10
<i>PER Publications</i>	10
<i>Staff</i>	11

PRESIDENT'S REPORT

Number 26 and Number 27

On January 1st Bulgaria and Romania entered the European Union bringing EU membership to 27 countries. Although more aspirants are waiting in the wings, it could be some time before another wave of EU enlargement takes place. The accession of these two Southeast European countries, then, is a landmark event in the evolution of the post-communist era.

Both countries have had to make deep and often painful reforms to adapt their political, economic and legal frameworks to the standards of the EU. One of the most difficult challenges that they faced was to find a path to interethnic accommodation.

I am proud that the Project on Ethnic Relations (PER) was able to play a small but important role in bringing this about. Since the early '90s PER has been very active in both countries working towards the prevention of ethnic conflicts by helping political leaders from the majority and minority communities to devise new means to work together in harmony and to improve relations with their neighbors throughout the region.

I vividly recall the volatile days of the early '90s when the euphoria of shedding the Communist yoke had begun to fade and extreme nationalism was on the rise in both Bucharest and Sofia.

In March 1990 in Romania there were violent interethnic clashes between the Romanians and the Hungarians in the beautiful Transylvanian city of Tirgu Mures. The absence of direct communication and dialogue between the leaders of the two ethnic communities left an opening for nationalist manipulators to foment violence. Soon afterwards, PER started a steady process of opening serious, high-level dialogue and negotiation that led in 1996, to the establishment of Romania's first-ever interethnic ruling coalition. The process succeeded because enlightened and pragmatic leaders on both sides learned, through dialogue, that they had more to gain from cooperation than competition, and had developed the know-how to create the necessary political arrangements. Although the specifics of cooperation between the major Romanian political parties and the Hungarian political alliance (UDMR/RMDSZ) in Romania have undergone many changes over the past decade, with the Hungarians in or out of the governmental coalition at one time or another, the basic accord has been maintained and serious disagreements concerning such complex issues in the use of mother tongue and decentralization have been overcome. This vastly improved interethnic picture was a truly impressive accomplishment that greatly strengthened Romania's readiness to claim EU membership.

In Sofia in 1990 I witnessed the hunger strike called by some Bulgarians to protest the aspirations of the Turkish minority to organize after-school programs for their children in the Turkish language. Traveling through a Turkish area, I encountered among local officials a number of Bulgarian nationalists whose office walls were

covered with maps of Greater Bulgaria. Fortunately for Bulgaria, the leadership of the main ethnic Turkish political grouping—the Movement for Rights and Freedoms (MRF)—turned out to be far more interested in obtaining mainstream economic, political, and social advantages for the Turkish minority than in focusing on their separate ethnic identity, which they of course nonetheless wish to preserve. This stance was affirmed in two landmark meetings organized by PER in Bulgaria in 2001, during which the ethnic Turkish leadership re-committed itself to full participation in the Bulgarian political process even while expressing its strong desire for what it depicted as a fairer share of power and resources. Here too, the path was thus eased to EU entry.

As the EU officials have insisted, despite their full membership, it still remains for Bulgaria and Romania to iron out some serious issues related to corruption, the justice system, and the like. PER would also note that problems of interethnic relations are never fully settled, and that persistent efforts will be required in both countries if they are to live up to hopes and expectations. Thus, we are watching with continued interest the renewal of a struggle between moderates and radicals in Romania over the disputatious issue of autonomy. And both new member countries will have to find the means to deal with extremist, xenophobic rhetoric of some parliamentary parties (Ataka, Greater Romania Party) in order to safeguard what they have achieved. These extremist parties are now trying to coalesce with other similar parties in the West to form a bloc inside the EU—a potential for considerable political mischief.

One of the most serious unresolved problems for Romania and Bulgaria, as well as for most of their neighbors, is the fate of their Romani communities. While both countries are making some efforts to improve the lives of their Romani citizens, it is no longer enough for them to wait for assistance from the international community. Sooner or later they will have to add their own serious investments and to make a concerted, national effort to improve the life of these communities. As labor mobility sees more trained and talented young people moving towards jobs elsewhere in the EU, there will be all the more reason to tap the potential resource represented by the large number of Romani youth, who for the most part continue to be left outside the educational system. But it will take a good deal more imagination and persistence than we have seen so far to make this work.

Bulgaria and Romania are now the new Southeast border of the EU. How well they manage their opportunities and fulfill their responsibilities will determine to some extent whether the remaining countries of their region eventually make it in as well, and how a future Europe will look.



Livia B. Plaks
Livia B. Plaks

Macedonia's Euro-Atlantic Integration

On November 18-19, 2006, the Project on Ethnic Relations and the Swiss Embassy in Macedonia organized the seventh Mavrovo roundtable discussion titled *Macedonia's Euro-Atlantic Integration: Advancing Common Interests* held in Mavrovo, Macedonia. The meeting took place against the backdrop of a new coalition government led by VMRO-DMPNE, DPA, and NSDP. In addition to already existing tensions between the two major ethnic Albanian parties, the formation of the new government raised tensions between the leading Albanian opposition party – which won the majority of the ethnic Albanian vote in the last parliamentary elections but was left out of the new governing coalition – and the government. The major goal of the Mavrovo roundtable was to address these emerging differences.

The items on the agenda included the responsibilities of the governing and opposition parties in continuing the reforms necessary for eventual EU integration, and governance and interethnic relations at the local level. The meeting was attended by senior Macedonian government officials including

the Prime Minister, leaders of the opposition, and senior international diplomats stationed in Macedonia.

The discussion indicated that progress on the most pressing issues for Macedonia will be difficult to achieve in the absence of a concerted effort to resolve the internal political conflict among the major actors in the Macedonian politics and to establish a minimum level of mutual trust among them. However, the discussion demonstrated that

there exists a political consensus among all Macedonia's parliamentary parties in support of the country's membership into the EU and NATO.

PER received a positive feedback from the participants on the utility of the Mavrovo discussions suggesting that the Mavrovo process is important to building a consensus among Macedonian political forces over issues of national interest. ■



From left to right: Imer Selmani, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Health of Macedonia, Nikola Gruevski, Prime Minister of Macedonia, Allen Kassof, President Emeritus of the Project on Ethnic Relations, Thomas Fuglister, Swiss Ambassador to Macedonia, and Gabriela Konevska Trajkovska, Deputy Prime Minister of Macedonia.

Montenegro to Establish Minority Councils

The Project on Ethnic Relations in cooperation with the Ministry for Human and Minority Rights Protection of Montenegro convened another roundtable discussion in its three year initiative on encouraging the development of a comprehensive government strategy toward ethnic minorities in Montenegro. The roundtable, held on June 2-3, 2006, in Kolasin, built on the first meeting of October 2005 that led to the creation and passage of a draft law on the protection of minority rights, and gathered leaders of ethnic minority communities, senior officials of parliamentary parties, and senior government officials to discuss the implementation of the law and especially prerogatives and election of minority councils. Experts from international organizations and neighboring countries also took part in the meeting and spoke about their countries' approaches to the formation of minority councils, minority self-governments, and other similar institutions.

The discussion focused on issues of council membership, and the role ethnic political parties should play in them. Other issues considered were councils' degree of competency in public affairs, and several key legal questions pertaining to their formation.

Participants reached broad agreement on a number of key points pertaining to the law. They agreed to adopt the new electoral rules taking into consideration provisions of the law, form minority councils according to specific features of each minority, and make

sure the council membership is authentic and representative in relation to given minorities.

As the third phase in this initiative, PER is planning a roundtable for March 2007, which will take on two issues: the inclusion of provisions for minority protection in the new Montenegrin constitution, and adoption of legislation on the formation of councils of national minorities. ■



From left to right: Ferhat Dinosh, President of the Democratic Union of Albanians, Vladimir Ristovski, Head of the Council of Europe Office in Montenegro, Paraschiva Badescu, Head of the OSCE Mission in Montenegro, Livia Plaks, President of the Project on Ethnic Relations, Gezim Hajdinaga, Minister for Human and Minority Rights Protection of Montenegro, Alex Grigor'ev, Director for Western Balkans of the Project on Ethnic Relations, Laszlo Jozsa, President of the National Council of the Hungarian Ethnic Minority in Serbia, and others.

PER Concludes “Serbs in the 21st Century” Initiative



From left to right: Lutfi Haziri, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Local Self-Government of Kosovo, Miodrag Vlahovic, Minister of Foreign Affairs of Montenegro, Livia Plaks, President of the Project on Ethnic Relations, Steven Burg, Member of the PER Council for Ethnic Accord, and Oliver Ivanovic, Head of the Serb List for Kosovo and Metohija in the Kosovo Assembly.

More than six years after the establishment of democratic institutions, the Serbian Radical Party still holds the largest number of seats in the Serbian parliament, and the democratic parties continue to suffer from bitter and paralyzing divisions. Given its location at the center of the Balkans and its economic, political, and ethnic ties to its neighbors, Serbia's political stability and economic development are invaluable factors for broader regional stability. Assessing

this state of affairs and in consultation with a great number of senior Serbian politicians, in July 2005, PER launched a new initiative, consisting of three roundtable discussions, titled *Serbs in the 21st Century*. Serbian President Boris Tadic had agreed to serve as the patron of this initiative. The purpose of the project was to help develop a common vision for the future of the country.

In July 2005 PER organized its first roundtable discussion titled *Serbia and Serbs: Identity and Politics* held in Belgrade. Participants were Serb political leaders from both within and outside of Serbia. They discussed issues related to interplay between identity and politics, and relations between Serbia and ethnic Serb communities outside Serbia's borders. This meeting was followed with a second roundtable on *Citizenship and Multiethnicity in Serbia* held in November 2005 in Novi Sad. The discussion centered on majority-minority relations in Serbia. The roundtables gathered senior politicians from Belgrade and minority leaders from across Serbia.

Nearly all the participants in the first two roundtables agreed that Serbia had achieved considerable progress in consolidating its nascent democratic institutions, but that a lot remains to be done to complete the process of transition successfully especially in implementation of already adopted laws.

continued on page 9

Reviving Interethnic Dialogue in South Serbia

In an effort to improve interethnic dialogue in South Serbia, in summer 2006, PER began a new project in Serbia focusing on the ethnic Albanian population in municipalities of Presevo, Bujanovac, and Medvedja. The initiative was launched upon prior consultation with the Coordination Body for South Serbia of the Serbian Government and in cooperation with the British Embassy in Serbia.

Although relations between Serbs and Albanians have been gradually improving since the end of the armed conflict in 2001, the Albanian community has continued to boycott participation in political life at the national level. The Albanians have boycotted elections at the national level. The Albanian ethnic minority in Serbia is the only minority that has refused so far to form its National Council as stipulated by Serbian law. The current political and economic situation in these three municipalities and what can be done to end the boycott on political participation were the main issues addressed in the first PER roundtable held on September 27, 2006. The meeting was attended by both Albanian and Serb local political leaders, Serbian government representatives, and international diplomats stationed in Belgrade and South Serbia.

The ethnic Albanian representatives identified lack of political will on the part of Serbian government to accommodate their demands and insufficient public investment in the region as the main sources of their grievances. Government officials acknowledged that not enough has been done to integrate the Albanian community into Serbia's public life. They pledged to intensify their efforts towards achieving this objective, but also stated that Albanian participation into Serbia's public life would accelerate the process of integration.

There was consensus among all participants that the problems should be resolved in a political manner. The Albanian leaders showed readiness to consider joining national politics through the establishment of the National Council of the Albanian Ethnic Minority in Serbia and by taking part in the upcoming parliamentary elections. Indeed, two Albanian political parties in South Serbia took part in the January 2007 Serbian parliamentary elections and won one seat. PER will return to these issues following the formation of the new Serbian government. ■



From left to right: Nagip Arifi, Mayor of Bujanovac, and Rasim Ljajic, President of the Serbian Government's Coordination Body for South Serbia.

PER Visits Georgia

From July 10-15, 2005, a three-person team from the Project on Ethnic Relations visited Georgia to gather information about the country's ongoing issues in the realm of interethnic relations, and to explore possible ways of contributing to their resolution. The PER team held meetings with numerous government officials, politicians, members of the opposition, independent analysts, leaders of NGOs, and representatives of international organizations in both Tbilisi and Sukhumi.

Of the two major unresolved conflicts in Georgia – Abkhazia and South Ossetia – PER determined prior to the trip, and after consulting with a range of experts and diplomats, to focus attention on the former. The majority of PER's meetings in Tbilisi were with individuals involved in or knowledgeable about the issue. The team also traveled to Sukhumi for discussions with senior political leaders and representatives of civil society there.

Officials and analysts in Tbilisi and Sukhumi presented starkly different pictures of the situation and the nature of conflict, and proposed diametrically opposing options to address it. While the

dominant theme in Tbilisi was Russia's critical role in the conflict, and that any final solution should preserve Georgia's sovereignty, in Sukhumi many interlocutors downplayed Russia's influence, and described a popular desire for Abkhaz independence as the main motivation behind their actions.

An encouraging facet of the discussions was that neither side indulged in extremist rhetoric demonizing the other, thus distinguishing this dispute from some of the interethnic issues PER has worked on in the Balkans. This suggests that the two communities may ultimately be able to put their conflict behind them and resume a normal life of peaceful coexistence. Achieving this, however, will require serious efforts by both sides on exploring ways to structure their future relations, and devise democratic institutions that will best serve the interests of stability and interethnic accord. PER is in the process of devising a confidence building initiative aiming to contribute to the realization of these goals, which are clearly so urgent for the Georgians, the Abkhaz, and the region at large. ■

Montenegro to Develop a Governmental Roma Strategy

In parallel with work on Montenegro's minority policy, the Project on Ethnic Relations has continued its project on helping the Montenegrin government develop a comprehensive strategy toward its Romani community. Adoption of such a strategy is recommended by the European Commission, the Council of Europe, and the OSCE. Furthermore, greater integration of Roma into society is an important part of the political criteria for accession to the European Union. Presently, Montenegro is the only state in the region without such a policy document.

PER in cooperation with the Ministry for Human and Minority Rights Protection of Montenegro convened the second and third

roundtables in February and October 2006, respectively. The meetings brought together government and parliament officials, Romani leaders and activists, and international experts to discuss ways of developing the strategy.

The roundtables focused on the draft strategy document written in the course of the PER project by Professor Nebojsa Vucinic of the University of Montenegro in cooperation with Romani leaders. Participants gave their feedback on the draft document, and made a set of suggestions for its improvement. ■



From left to right: Behija Ramovic, NGO Zensko Srce, Fana Delija, Center for Roma Initiatives in Niksic, Fatima Naza, Center for Roma Initiatives in Niksic, Senad Sejdovic, Romani activist, and Jaha Samir, Romani activist.



From left to right: Andrzej Mirga, Director for Roma Programs of the Project on Ethnic Relations, Gezim Hajdinaga, Minister for Human and Minority Rights Protection of Montenegro, Livia Plaks, President of the Project on Ethnic Relations, and Nedzmedin Salja, President of NGO Rromski Krug Crne Gore.

PER REGIONAL CENTER FOR CENTRAL, EASTERN, AND

Romani Communities to Benefit from European Union Structural Funds

As one of the most disadvantaged ethnic groups in Europe, Romani communities are receiving increasing attention from the EU, and their respective country governments. In this context, Romani interests have been included in the 2007 – 2013 EU Structural Funds package, as part of mainstreaming the Romani issue. However, the main challenge still lies ahead: how to ensure that these funds reach the Roma themselves, especially in Romania and Bulgaria.

Hoping that a dialogue would help identify areas most in need of such funds, and expedite the project implementation process, in June and November 2006, PER's Regional Center organized two roundtable discussions on *EU Structural Funds: Policies Toward the Roma*, held in Bucharest and Brussels, respectively. The meetings were attended by EU officials, Roma and government leaders from Bulgaria and Romania (as acceding countries), and representatives of Hungary, Slovakia, and Spain as countries that are already using EU Structural Funds. The main purpose of these meetings was to discuss and share concrete policy measures to ensure the effective use of Structural Funds targeting Romani communities.

The roundtables provided rare opportunities to the Romanian and Bulgarian delegations to discuss with various EU officials and governmental representatives of EU member states about how to use structural funds to address Roma related issues more efficiently. Participants reviewed the progress made so far, highlighted some of the main future challenges, and provided new recommendations for implementing upcoming projects. Romanian and Bulgarian officials were encouraged by proactive EU policies targeting Romani communities, and positive experiences of new EU member states to adopt policy measures that will benefit their minorities, and ultimately improve overall ethnic relations in the region. ■



From left to right: Livia Plaks, President of the Project on Ethnic Relations, Interpreter, Vladimir Spidla, EU Commissioner for Employment, Social Affairs and Equal Opportunities, Andrzej Mirga, Director for Roma Programs of the Project on Ethnic Relations, Jan Jarab, Commissioner for Human Rights of the Czech Republic, Ivan Ivanov, Executive Director of the European Roma Information Office.

Legal and Institutional Framework of Cultural Autonomy

In spring 2006, the PER Regional Center for Central, Eastern and Southeastern Europe convened a roundtable discussion titled *The Draft Law on National Minorities in Romania: Legal and Institutional Framework of Cultural Autonomy*. The purpose of the roundtable was to review, critically analyze, and articulate the concept of cultural autonomy in the hopes that it contributes to the national debate on minority law, as well as expedite the process of adopting and implementing it. The attendance of the roundtable by senior government and legislative officials, various senior leaders of minority organizations, civil society representatives, and of an expert of the Venice Commission of the Council of Europe underscores the importance of minority issues for the country's full integration in Europe. Participants concluded that cultural autonomy provides an adequate legal framework for expansion and respect of minority rights. The roundtable was part of a series of dialogues organized by the Center on Romania's draft law on minorities. ■

Moldova and its Neighbors: Path to Europe

Following the accession of Romania to the EU, Moldova became a next-door neighbor of the enlarged Union. This geographical proximity to an EU neighbor has inevitably intensified debates on Moldova's prospects for European integration. In this light, in May 2006, PER's Regional Center organized the second two-day roundtable of its initiative on *The Republic of Moldova and its Neighbors: Path to Europe*. Participants coming from Moldova, Romania, and other countries, civil society representatives, scholars, and EU officials identified consolidation of nascent democratic institutions, resolution of the Transdnistria issue and strengthening of political and economic relations with neighbors as the main challenges on the road to Moldova's accession. The PER Regional Center will continue its efforts in Moldova to develop programs that improve interethnic dialogue and promote the consolidation of institutions aiming to bring the country closer to EU integration. ■

Managing Interethnic Relations in the Educational System

The PER Regional Center in cooperation with the Ministry of Education and Research of Romania organized three workshops for school directors, teachers, and inspectors on the topic of *Teaching of Romani Culture, History, and Language*. Training sessions focused on what methods to apply in teaching aspects of Romani culture, history, and language as well as on the need

SOUTHEASTERN EUROPE

for teachers to understand and respect legal provisions providing for equal access to education. The training was accredited by the Ministry of Education and Research and will be offered again to teachers at the national level. ■

Trainings for Moldovan and Romanian Journalists

In July and September 2006, PER's Regional Center organized two three-day training sessions for journalists held in Chisinau, Moldova, and Maramures, Romania, respectively. The first session aimed at raising awareness of EU policies on minorities and explored ways on how local journalists can bring these policies closer to the people of Moldova. The second training session focused on the role of the media in consolidating interethnic tolerance. The program also included various visits to minority communities to help participants witness first-hand the problems faced by ethnic communities, and establish a direct contact between media and minorities. ■



PER Staff and Romanian and Moldovan journalists on a visit in Maramures, Romania

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NEW MAJORITIES AND MINORITIES IN THE WESTERN BALKANS *continued from cover*

settlement of this question will significantly change regional geopolitical dynamics. In Budapest, regional leaders and senior international officials discussed the state of interethnic relations in the Balkans and especially the changing dynamics in relations between different ethnic communities in the region, political models of majority-minority accommodation, relations between so-called “mother countries” and kin populations across state borders, ways of strengthening democratic interethnic governance, as well as prospects for building a democratic and multiethnic Kosovo.

Participants shared their experiences on interethnic governance and debated whether interethnic models are applicable across borders or should each country develop its own approach. They shared a strong consensus that the multi-ethnic character of the population must be reflected in the making of institutions, policies, and practices of the Balkan states. There was also broad agreement that minorities should enjoy the same human rights as all other citizens, as well as extensive cultural rights necessary to preserve their identities. Political equality, reflected

in equitable representation of ethnic groups in state institutions and the meaningful influence of these groups over state policies, was seen as a key component in the establishment of stable democracies in countries with multiethnic populations.

The issue of Kosovo’s future status dominated the discussion. Although there were disagreements among participants about how the final status should look, they agreed

that all stakeholders can and should play a more constructive role. Integration of the Serbs into Kosovo’s public life was considered as one of the biggest challenges of post-status Kosovo. Various regional models of relations between so-called mother countries and external kin populations, and the limits of responsibility and authority of a “mother country” over its co-ethnic kin were also addressed. ■



Participants in the Budapest roundtable.

IMPROVING INTERETHNIC CONFIDENCE IN KOSOVO *continued from cover*

recommendations, on October 2, 2006, PER organized a roundtable discussion titled *The State of Political Relations Between the Kosovo Albanian and Serb Communities*. The meet-

ing gathered Kosovo’s most senior Albanian and Serb political leaders and representatives of the international community accredited in Kosovo.



From left to right: Andrzej Mirga, Director for Roma Programs of the Project on Ethnic Relations, Fatmir Sejdiu, President of Kosovo, Livia Plaks, President of the Project on Ethnic Relations, and Joachim Ruecker, Special Representative of the UN Secretary General in Kosovo.

The participants expressed their concern about the state of relations and dialogue between the leaders of Kosovo’s largest ethnic communities, and especially about the absence of confidence between Serb and Albanian politicians. Although no specific agreement on how to address the most pressing issues, such as improving security for the minorities or participation of Serbs in Kosovo institutions of the provisional self-government, was achieved, participants agreed that dialogue is the best way to address these concerns and that it should continue. Kosovo government officials pledged to devise programs to increase minority employment in the public sector, build an underpass under the Pristina-Skopje highway connecting two Serb villages, help minority media outlets, etc. The meeting also served as important background for working with the Serb community on substantive issues following the status resolution and on improving mutual confidence in the meantime.

IMPROVING INTERETHNIC CONFIDENCE IN KOSOVO *continued from page 8*
Prospects for Minority Reintegration in Kosovo

Once known as a place of cultural and political revival of the RAE ethnic communities, Kosovo today is a place where minority accommodation has become a challenge. Although the situation of minorities has been gradually improving, their full integration into Kosovo's life is far from satisfactory. Among the most crucial issues at stake are minority participation in decision making, lack of interethnic tolerance, and return and integration of refugees.

Aiming to help accelerate this process of integration the Project on Ethnic Relations convened a roundtable discussion titled *Roma, Ashkali, and Egyptians (RAE) of Kosovo: Reconciling the Past and Forging Future Prospects for Reintegration* on September 29, 2005 in Pristina. The meeting assembled a number of senior political figures from the Kosovo government and political parties, the RAE communities, and international bodies to discuss the problems confronting the RAE communities in Kosovo.

The roundtable provided a unique opportunity for RAE representatives to voice their concerns and debate with local and international policymakers the possibility of charting mutually acceptable solutions. Participants agreed that it is essential that RAE communities are treated as legitimate stakeholders in Kosovo's multi-ethnic future, and that their integration would not only improve their position, but would also contribute to the consolidation of Kosovo's nascent democratic institutions.

Building a Better Education for All

On December 5, 2006 PER organized another roundtable discussion in Kamenica titled *Building a Better Education for All*. The meeting brought together various officials from Kosovo Albanian, Serb, and Roma communities as well as international representatives to discuss the problems confronting education of non-Albanian communities and seek ideas to remedy the situation. The discussion focused on concrete issues, such as access to education, language of instruction, curriculum, financing, and mutual recognition of diplomas. Participants agreed that interethnic cooperation on concrete issues

that produce immediate and tangible results benefiting all communities will strengthen confidence among ethnic communities, and improve the overall situation. The meeting endorsed a set of recommendations for action in the area of education, such as drafting a unified curriculum, improve infrastructure for preschool minority students, and provide more funds for educational needs. Representatives of communities and governmental officials pledged their commitment to the process of implementation of these proposals.

The project will continue with an emphasis on improving interethnic relations at the local level. ■



From left to right: Muhamet Arifi, Activist of NGO Youth, Bekim Sylja, Manager of Roma and Ashkali Documentation Center in Kosovo, Oliver Schmidt Gutzat, Head of Minority Advisory Office, OSCE Mission in Kosovo, Bashkim Ibishi, Civil Society Activist, Nicolae Gheorghe, Advisor on Roma and Sinti Issues, OSCE/ODIHR, Cyme Mahmutaj, Advisor to the Prime Minister of Kosovo.

PER CONCLUDES "SERBS IN THE 21ST CENTURY" INITIATIVE *continued from page 4*

The third and last roundtable under the title *Serbs and Their Neighbors: Paths to Europe* was held in April 2006 in Bucharest. The participation at this meeting was broadened to include selected individuals from the first two roundtables and senior political officials from the neighboring countries, the European Union, OSCE, Council of Europe, NATO, and the United States. The meeting focused on the obstacles that Serbia faces on its path towards European integration. The cooperation with the Hague Tribunal and the resolution of Kosovo's status were identified as the main challenges.

The outcome of the Bucharest discussion was a number of consensual recommendations for action by Serbia, its neighbors, and the international community: it was agreed that Serbia should continue with the process of institution consolidation; Serbia's neighbors should intensify mutual cooperation in both economic and political areas aiming at benefiting from one another's experiences with the process of transition; and the international community should increase its economic assistance directed to programs aiming to ameliorate living standards, and ease up its conditions on Serbia's European integration. ■



From left to right: Livia Plaks, President of the Project on Ethnic Relations, Therese Sobieski, Head of European Commission's External Affairs Unit for Serbia, Montenegro, and Kosovo, Zoran Loncar, Minister for Public Administration and Local Self-Government of Serbia, and Allen Kassof, President Emeritus of the Project on Ethnic Relations.

PER Announcements

PER is pleased to announce the following changes in the Executive Board, Council for Ethnic Accord, and Staff:

Executive Board

ALFRED H. MOSES, Chairman: Ambassador Moses has had a distinguished career in public service spanning more than three decades. In 1994 President Clinton appointed Ambassador Moses as the American Ambassador to Romania where he served for three years. Following his ambassadorial service, Ambassador Moses served as special Presidential envoy for Cyprus negotiations. Since 1956 Ambassador Moses has been engaged in the active practice of law when he joined the Washington, D.C. firm of Covington & Burling where he became partner and where he now serves as senior counsel. In addition, Ambassador Moses is currently vice chairman and co-founder of Promontory Financial Group. Moses was president of The American Jewish Committee from 1991 until 1994. He had written and lectured extensively on Central European and Middle East issues.

We express our sincere gratitude to **DR. DAVID A. HAMBURG**, former President of the Carnegie Corporation of New York for his many years of service to PER as the past Chairman of the Board. His unflagging wisdom, thoughtfulness, and insight into the complexities of inter-group relations have made an essential contribution to PER's many years of fruitful work. Dr. Hamburg will remain on PER's Executive Board.

CLYDE I. RANKIN III, Vice-Chair: Mr. Rankin is a partner in the international law firm of Baker & McKenzie. For the past several years Mr. Rankin has represented U.S. companies investing in the Russian Federation and in Central and Eastern Europe. He has served as the Chair of Princeton University's Alumni Council and is Chairman of the Board of Trustees of the Rensselaerville Institute.

PER would like to thank **WILLIAM S. MOODY**, Program Director at the Rockefeller Brothers Fund, for many years of encouragement and support as he ends his term on PER's Executive Board.

PER is very pleased to announce that Ambassador **DONALD M. BLINKEN**, former U.S. Ambassador to Hungary (1994-1997), has

joined the PER Executive Board. Ambassador Blinken has had a career blending leadership in investment banking, education, and arts patronage. He co-founded the investment banking/venture capital firm of E.M. Warburg, Pincus & Co. in 1996 and served as chairman of the Board of Trustees of the State University of New York from 1978-1990 as well as on numerous other boards. Ambassador Blinken graduated magna cum laude in economics from Harvard University and is the author of a book on American trade policy and numerous articles on education and international affairs.

Council for Ethnic Accord

RICHARD M. MILES: member of the PER Council for Ethnic Accord. Ambassador Miles has had a distinguished career as a diplomat having served among other sites as Chief of Mission in Yugoslavia and as a U.S. ambassador to Bulgaria, Azerbaijan, and Georgia.

Staff

ANDRZEJ MIRGA, the former PER Director for Roma Programs, has moved on as of December 4th 2006 to become the Senior Advisor on Roma and Sinti Issues at the OSCE/ODIHR Contact Point for Roma and Sinti Issues. PER would like to thank Andrzej for his longstanding and valuable contributions to its programs over a period of almost 14 years, and for being a thoughtful and faithful colleague.

ADRIENNE M. LANDRY has been appointed as Program Officer and **ANGELIQUE J. OLMO** as Administrative and Development Officer. Ms. Landry has an MA from Columbia University in Russian, Eurasian and East European Studies and a Harriman Institute certificate. Ms. Olmo has a BA from the College of New Jersey and a non-profit management certificate from the Teachers College of New Jersey. Ms. Landry brings in her experience in the countries of the former Soviet Union and Ms. Olmo has been the Director of Development at the Population Resource Center in Princeton.

SHPETIM GASHI of Columbia University's Master in International Affairs Program has been PER's Program Associate/Intern in 2006-2007. ■

Recent PER Publications

New Majorities and Minorities in the Changing Balkans (2007)

Macedonia's Euro-Atlantic Integration: Advancing Common Interests (2007)

The Political Uses of Anti-Semitism (2006)

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Macedonia: Agenda 2006 (2006)

Romani Politics Present and Future (2006)

Serbs in the Twenty-First Century (2006)

Kosovo Roundtables (2006)

Harvard University's Negotiation Journal published in its January 2007 issue a case analysis on the work of the Project on Ethnic Relations in the Balkans written by Professor Steven L. Burg of Brandeis University. The study is available on our website: www.per-usa.org

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Note on Terminology

In this bulletin, the spelling of the name “Kosovo” is used (rather than “Kosova,” the spelling preferred by Albanians, or “Kosovo and Metohija” or “Kosmet” preferred by Serbs) because that is the spelling most commonly used in the English-speaking world. For the same reason, Serbian names of places are used, for example, Pristina and not Prishtina, Kamenica and not Kamenice. However, the spelling “Kosova” and “Kosovo and Metohija” is used in the names of Kosovo political parties and organizations.

“Serb” is used as an ethnic term, whereas “Serbian” is employed when referring to Serbia.

**PROJECT ON
ETHNIC
RELATIONS**



The **PROJECT ON ETHNIC RELATIONS (PER)** was founded in 1991 in anticipation of serious interethnic conflicts that were to erupt following the collapse of Communism in Central and Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union. PER conducts programs of intervention and dialogue and has served as a neutral mediator in several major disputes in the region. PER also conducts programs of training, education, and research at international, national, and community levels.

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