

# Reconstruction commences in Kosovo

Initiatives to begin the reconstruction of public libraries in the war-torn province of Kosovo were agreed to at a recent meeting in The Hague.

An action plan which will establish a network of mobile libraries throughout the country was agreed to. Sixty-five library buildings have been destroyed or severely damaged during the recent conflict.

Following the recommendations of a recent report on libraries in Kosovo, it was agreed that the quickest and most effective way to serve the needs of people, in the greatest number of communities, would be a mobile library and information service. The Open Society Institute in Kosovo, 'KFOS', has already ordered one vehicle. Two others are expected to be funded by donors, and sources for several more are currently being sought. All vehicles will provide internet access. The United Nations' civil administration in Kosovo, UNMIK,

has agreed to provide security for the service.

Other initiatives agreed were:

- To establish a Kosovo Libraries Consortium which would link international interests with interests in Kosovo.
- To take steps to establish an effective library infrastructure in Kosovo, including a Kosovo Library Council, which would give advice, and make recommendations to relevant bodies, on library and information services and on projects and expenditure.
- To develop the role of the National and University Library, to enable it to provide central technical services and a range of services to support libraries at the regional and local level.
- To develop a network of regional resource centres, supporting all types of libraries in their districts.

- To hold seminars and workshops to maintain and extend the skills of library staff.

It was agreed to hold the next meeting of the group in Prishtina, and to plan a general conference of library staff in Kosovo and a training workshop on the same occasion.

Ross Shimmom, secretary general of IFLA, who chaired the meeting, said: 'Libraries are a vital tool for reconstruction and the establishment of democracy. That is why we need to rebuild the library network in Kosovo, where people lack truly basic necessities such as houses, heating, and electricity.' He stressed that the meeting was determined that the thought-provoking, yet practical, report *Libraries in Kosova/Kosovo* should not, like so many others, be left to gather dust on the shelves. 'I believe that the key international agencies, working closely with librarians and local communities can help make a difference to people's lives', he said. ■

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