



CENTRE FOR SECURITY COOPERATION

December 2009

“Conference on Parliamentary Oversight of the Security Sector” “New Security Challenges in SEE”

14 - 16 December 2009
Rakitje, Zagreb

The Conference on Parliamentary Oversight of the Security Sector “New Security Challenges in SEE” was held in RACVIAC - Centre for Security Cooperation during the period of 14th – 16th December 2009.



The purpose of the Conference was to bring together representatives of Parliamentary Security Committees with the aim to produce a regional forum designed to encourage comprehensive discussions on “New Security Challenges in SEE”, which are common in the work of Parliamentary Security Committees in Southeast European countries and can provide basis for standardization in this field.

The seminar gathered participants with knowledge and experience in the field of security in SEE region, representing relevant ministries, institutions, as well

as parliamentary committees directly involved in this subject. It was conducted as a combination of lectures and a panel discussion. The participants and lecturers came from nine countries and four organizations, namely: Albania (1), Bosnia and Herzegovina (6), Croatia (4), Moldova (3), Serbia (2), Montenegro (3), Slovenia (1), NATO HQ in Sarajevo (1), OSCE mission in BiH (2), DCAF (1), SEESAC (1), Albanian Diplomatic Academy (1), French Embassy to the Republic of Croatia (1), Faculty of Political Science at the University of Zagreb (2).

Seminar Opening

In his opening speech Ambassador Nikola TODORČEVSKI, Director of RACVIAC, expressed his warm welcome to all participants.



Ambassador pointed out that the Committees on Defence and Security could be used as specialized bodies of parliaments that give fruitful advice and make recommendations to the plenary concerning laws or decisions pertaining to national defence and the security of the citizens. He added that in view of the foregoing it makes sense to collate and make accessible guidelines or a body of good practices, found in international parliamentary processes, with the aim to improve professional quality in parliamentary oversight of the security sector.

Plenary Session

During a two-day seminar, members of parliamentary committees of the security

sector from different countries and a multinational team of experts provided an insight into the parliamentary oversight of the security sector and subsequently discussed the status of its implementation in each country.



The experts underlined the significance of promoting an even greater parliamentary role in drawing up national security strategies and in exercising civil control over the national security structures, as one of the most important elements in the development of a democratic community.

The seminar covered a wide range of topics such as: principles, mechanisms and practices in the parliamentary oversight of the security sector; the role of parliament in national security policy; and a changing nature of civil-military relations in the region. It also initiated lively discussions on the achievements, mechanisms, challenges, problems, lesson learned and experiences in SEE region aimed at seeking the possible ways of further improvement with regard to parliamentary oversight of the security sector.

The keynote of the conference was Brig Zimir SINANOVIC, PhD, from B&H Ministry of Defence, Joint Staff.



He stressed that the countries in the SEE region should be included in all regional and international security forums and organizations, and that they need to accept, adopt and execute international obligations as well as to improve constant interaction between parliament and all other factors of security sector, especially in addressing challenges and threats. Mrs Suzana ANGHEL, Project Officer in DCAF, analyzed the main principles of parliamentary oversight such as control, consultation, scrutiny, transparency and accountability. She emphasised that the parliamentary committees of the security sector should have proactive and reactive role, and that they need authority, ability and attitude (political will) in order to be effective. She added that it would also be useful for them to make use of lessons learned and recommendations as a key in offering solutions to security issues and avoiding problems reappear.

Prof Vlatko CVRTILA, Faculty of Political Science, University of Zagreb; delivered a presentation titled “*Evaluation of the Situation in SEE Region in Terms of Parliamentary Oversight of the Security Sector.*” He said that the security sector covers the elements of the public sector that has the right to apply force in matters of security and has traditionally been the central sector of the national state. A security sector reform is an important precondition for the development of the state. It must focus on effectiveness, in order to adopt to the local environment and process of democratic consolidation and also build new capacities of the security system. Since ideal type of SSR exists only in theory, the process is a never ended story.

Ambassador Lisen BASHKURTI, President of the Albanian Diplomatic Academy, in his presentation titled *Civil-Military Relations in Democratic Countries.* He pointed out the need of

preserving national democratic and cultural tradition, and at the same time accepting international values, goals and global democratic principles. In Ambassador's opinion, the parliamentarians should be fully informed on key security issues and related information. He ended his speech by emphasizing the necessity of building proper constitutional and legislative structures with clearly defined responsibility/sovereignty in state security issues.

The following presentations were also given during this conference:

The Civil-Military Relations in Democratic Countries and the Example of France by Lieutenant Colonel Olivier ROUANET, Military Attaché, Embassy of France to Croatia; *Parliamentary Control and Civil Oversight as Instruments of Regional Ownership* by Colonel Hamza VISCA, B&H; *Parliamentary Committees on Defence and Security – Principles, Mechanisms and Practices* by Mr Gaqo TANKU, Albanian MOD.

SUMMARY/CONCLUSION

The conference was successfully conducted. The participants were provided with the opportunity to discuss topics and challenges in the Parliamentary Oversight of the Security Sector and they discussed a wide range of issues and problems concerning the parliamentary control over the security sector. The contribution of specialized lecturers proved to be stimulating, especially in prompting healthy discussion climate. Following a two-day conference and a panel discussion, all the participants agreed that the working environment of the parliamentary committees on defence and security is characterized by lack of transparency, inadequate communication, complexity, lack of expertise, strong involvement of

the executive and weak involvement of civil society.

The participants came up with some solutions for the aforementioned problems, such as involving parliamentary committees on security sector in the following processes: developing legislation for defence and security sector, advising on defence budgets and monitoring expenditures, reviewing government defence policy and security strategy, consulting on international commitments and treaties to be ratified by parliament, advising on the use of force and the participation in peacekeeping operations with deployment of national troops abroad, monitoring defence expenditures and increasing civil-military cooperation.

The lecturers and participants expressed their satisfaction with the significant progress countries had already achieved. These efforts were praised, but they agreed there was still a strong need for better coordination and cooperation on a regional level.

At the end of the conference, the participants stressed the need to continue holding such conferences in the future.

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