Introduction


This was the fifth activity related to Cluster Munitions organized by RACVIAC and its partners. The purpose of this Workshop was to share the latest developments related to the implementation of the Convention on Cluster Munitions (CCM). Objectives included the following:

- To provide the participants with an overview of the implementation of the Convention on Cluster Munitions;
- To inform the participants about the results of the Third Meeting of States Parties (3MSP) held in Oslo, Norway, 11 – 14 September 2012;
- To provide a forum for discussion on the implementation of the Convention in South Eastern Europe with a focus on retention and destruction as well as national strategies, implementation plans, progress reports, possible international and regional cooperation and needs for support from outside the region;
- To provide an opportunity to observe the process of disposal of cluster munitions stockpiles.

The Workshop comprised presentations, discussions and a demonstration of the cluster munitions disassembly and destruction by open detonation.

Participation

Altogether 32 participants attended the Workshop, representing the SEE countries, as well as other countries and international organizations, including Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Belgium, Croatia, Germany, the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Montenegro, Norway, Serbia, Spain, Norwegian People’s Aid (NPA), NGO Youth for Peace.
Overview of the Workshop

During the Workshop opening ceremony, Mr Sasho Stefanovski, State Secretary of the Ministry of Defence of Macedonia, Brigadier General Zdravko Jakop, Deputy Director of RACVIAC, Mr Hrvoje Debac, representative of the Government’s Office for Mine Action, Croatia, Mr Emil Jeremic, Norwegian People’s Aid, Regional Director for Southeast Europe, H.E. Ms Gudrun Steinacker, Ambassador of Germany to the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia* delivered welcome speeches underlying the importance of the Convention.

Opening Session

The Workshop was divided into two main parts. The first part was held in the conference room and focused on the latest developments in the implementation of the Convention. Ambassador Steffen Kongstad, Permanent Representative of Norway to the UN Office in Geneva, President of the 3rd Meeting of States Parties (3MSP) to the Convention and our special guest, shared national and personal experience from the 3MSP held in Oslo, Norway, in September 2012. He underlined the high failure rate and the harm caused by cluster munitions to civilian population. He mentioned the unfortunate use of cluster munitions in Syria, but stressed that it did not mean the failure of the Convention. With the change of national strategies the market for cluster munitions had practically disappeared and the usage had become limited. However, the guarantee for non-use is the destruction only. According to the reports presented during the 3MSP large areas have been returned to people in affected countries, clearance in majority of countries should be finished in five years. Ambassador Kongstad encouraged all countries to join the Convention, maintain victim assistance, international cooperation and share experience not only within, but also outside the region.

Major Lode Dewaegheneire, Military Advisor on Arms Control, Belgian Defence Staff provided a presentation on the reporting within the Convention and encouraged countries to share information as much as possible and request for assistance if necessary. Mr Lee Moroney, Programme Manager, NPA introduced to the audience the NPA Shadow Programme. He underlined that the Shadow initiative was complementary to the industrial destruction facilities and applies the following main principles: in-country solution, help for self-help, national ownership, capacity building, minimal facilities, and minimal transportation. Furthermore, Mr Emil Jeremic, Regional Director for Southeast Europe, NPA presented the concluded and ongoing projects of the NPA, aimed at survey and clearance of areas affected by cluster munitions in the SEE.

Representatives of the countries of the region, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia*, Montenegro reported on the progress made in their countries. According to the reports a lot of progress has been made. However, hazardous areas affected by remnants of cluster munitions remain significant and cover in Bosnia and Herzegovina 11 km², in Croatia 4.3 km², in Montenegro 1.7 km². In February 2013 the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia* signed a Memorandum of Understanding with the NPA, regulating a joint project regarding the complete destruction of the stockpiles of cluster munitions held by the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia*.

* Turkey recognizes the Republic of Macedonia with its constitutional name.
The project is expected to be completed by 31 October 2013. It is co-financed by the Ministry of Defence of the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia*, the German Federal Foreign Office and the Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs and it serves as an excellent example of international cooperation.

It was also noted that Serbia has not signed the Convention yet, but hopes to have a positive political decision. Also, Serbia has been working with the NPA for three years on a clearance project in the Southern part of Serbia. As a result, the suspected hazardous area was reduced to 7.3 km$^2$ and the clearance should start soon.

As a short outlook from the SEE, the Spanish representative outlined how their country faced the challenge of cluster munitions by using industrial method of destruction of stockpiles.

The experts agreed that it was very hard to achieve 100% clearance and incidents may occur in the areas handed back to the population. Also, as examples show, cluster munitions can be discovered at later stages in storages or factories producing them and require further action of the government. Lack of funds, manpower and experience often require regional cooperation and assistance from outside the region. The universalization of the Convention and victim assistance remain important.

During the second part of the Workshop participants visited the storage site in Erebino and the training area Krivolak. In Erebino participants were briefed on and observed the disassembling of M93 mortar bombs and BKF dispensing canister containing AO 2.5RT sub-munitions, the two kinds of cluster munitions to be destroyed by the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia*. The demonstration of the disposal process continued in Krivolak training area with checking of demolition pits and observation of destruction of sub-munitions by open detonation.

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Summary/Recommendations

The event covered the latest developments in the implementation of the Convention on Cluster Munitions and gave an opportunity for the countries of the region to present their progress and discuss the implementation of the Convention in the SEE with the supporting countries and international organizations. Although the achievements have been presented, in the SEE countries there are still stockpiles and areas suspected of contamination with cluster munitions. Therefore, clearance and destruction of stockpiles remain important and urgent tasks.
organize similar events demonstrating the destruction of cluster munitions, share experience within and outside the SEE. The event has confirmed the possibility of successful cooperation of several organizations: RACVIAC, the Ministry of Defence of the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia*, NPA, Government Office for Mine Action of the Republic of Croatia and.

RACVIAC stands ready to continue the series of workshops on cluster munitions in 2014, serving as a platform for discussions and initial point of cooperation.

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