



CENTRE FOR SECURITY COOPERATION

Cooperative Security Environment with Focus on Arms Control Pillar

**"Conference on the 20th Anniversary of the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention:
From the Ottawa Process Towards a Mine Free World"
CSE-A7-C-17**

**16-18 October 2017, Zagreb and Sisak-
Moslavina County, Republic of Croatia**

Introduction

The aim of this Conference was to celebrate the 20th anniversary of the Ottawa Convention by providing a forum for discussion on the status and progress since the Convention's entry into force and its historical impact on the global humanitarian and security architecture. Also, it aimed to examine the role and importance of cooperation between governmental and non-governmental organizations in the development of an effective implementation of Victim Assistance System and to discuss and evaluate the opportunities and challenges that fall within the scope of political commitment and expressed aspiration to meet the goal of a "Land Mine-Free World by 2025".

The event was organized in two parts. On the first day, 17th October, the event was organized in a form of a one-day Conference. It was attended by 128 participants, lecturers, VIP guests and media representatives. RACVIAC invitees that attended the event came from the following countries: AL (2), BA (2), HR (2), ME (1), MK (1), RO (1), SI (1), and TR (1).

On the second day, 18th October, a field study trip was organized for participants to visit an actual demining work site in the Sisak-Moslavina County followed by a presentation about humanitarian demining. The Conference was co-organized by RACVIAC and Office for Mine Action of the Government of Croatia, in cooperation with the Canadian Embassy to Croatia. It was financially supported by the Federal Republic of Germany.

Execution

The Conference was opened with a Welcome address by RACVIAC Director Ambassador Haydar Berk who pointed out that landmines affect not only the South East European countries but the whole world as well. He also emphasised that considering the goal of a "Land Mine-Free World by 2025" RACVIAC will continue to organise seminars and conferences to overcome the existing challenges. Welcome addresses that followed were delivered by Ambassador of Canada to Croatia, H.E. Daniel Maksymiuk and Ambassador of Germany to Croatia, H.E. Thomas E. Schultze.

A special guest at the Conference was the former Minister of Foreign Affairs of Canada and the Nobel Peace Prize Nominee for leadership on banning mines, Honourable Lloyd Axworthy, PhD. Hon. Axworthy greeted the participants and pointed out

of anti-personnel mines represents the inhumanity of this world and that the dreadful aftermath of their use remains long after the army has left an area.



Opening of the Conference
Hon. Lloyd Axworthy, PhD, former
Minister of Foreign Affairs of Canada
and Nobel Peace Prize Nominee

Next to address the audience were Assistant Minister in the Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs of the Republic of Croatia, Mr Amir Muharemi and, State Secretary in the Ministry of Interior of the Republic of Croatia and Envoy of the President of the Government of the Republic of Croatia, Ms Terezija Gras..

The Conference was divided into three panels marking the past, present and the future of landmines and the Ottawa Convention.

The panel 'The Past' concentrated on the background and importance of the Ottawa Convention and its impact on the ground, both from the governmental and non-governmental point of view. Dr Axworthy presented the audience with the efforts invested, the atmosphere and reactions at the time before the signing of the Convention and during its signing.

The second panel was dedicated to 'The Present', meaning the status of progress since the Convention's Entry into force. One of the panellists, Mr Mirsad Tokić, a former deminer and mine survivor and Member of the Association "MineAid", shared with the participants his personal story and explained the consequences that mine survivors experience in their daily life.



The Conference audience

The panel 'The Future' focused on the ways and possibilities of meeting the aspiration of a land mine free world by 2025. The focus was put on understanding the linkages between Mine Action and the Agenda 2030 and its sustainable development goals. The panellists were H.E. Stefano Toscano, Ambassador and Director of the Geneva International Centre for Humanitarian Demining, Ms Sabina Beber Boštjančič, Acting Director, ITF Enhancing Human Security and Mr Hans Risser, Head of Operations at the Department for Humanitarian Disarmament, Norwegian People's Aid.

The theoretical part of the Conference was closed with questions and answers posed by the audience.

On the second working day a field trip to Petrinja, Sisak and Mošćenica was organized for participants to see how work in the field looks like. The participants were welcomed by the Director of the Croatian Mine Action Center (CROMAC), Mr Zdravko Modrušan after which the Assistant Director of CROMAC Mr Tomislav Ban presented the mine situation in the Republic of Croatia and Sisak-Moslavina County.

Mr Modrušan explained the demining process at the site itself and in the wider surroundings so that the guests could get a good insight into the context of the mine problem that Croatia is facing. He stressed that Croatia has withdrawn almost 60% of humanitarian demining funds from the European Union funds which puts the Croatian Mine Action System at the very top when it comes to successfulness of absorbing the European funds. The audience was also informed about the current situation regarding mine

contamination in the Republic of Croatia. The study trip finished with a commemoration of 12 civilians in Mošćenica who were killed by mines.



Field trip visit to Komarevo, Sisak-Moslavina County

Conclusion

According to the feedback received via the RACVIAC questionnaire both academic and administrative aspects of the Conference were very well rated.

Some of the proposals for the next year that will be taken into consideration are:

- More information about improvised explosive devices
- More information about mine victim's assistance/care
- Understanding the utility of the Ottawa Convention
- The needs and necessities to be met to fulfil the '2025 goal'
- Sustainable Development Goals (SDG)
- More information about challenges in SEE (landmines, cluster bombs...)

As regards the next year the topics that concern Mine Action will be integrated into a separate panel within the "Arms Control Symposium". We will strive to gather relevant speakers who will present the current developments in the Mine Action domain and provide more information on the above-mentioned proposals.

RACVIAC will continue to be a facilitator of expert discussions as well as a platform for meetings and exchange of ideas on this crucial topic for a safer world.

Compiled by CSE Pillar
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