1. INTRODUCTION

Pursuant to RACVIAC Programme for 2010, the Co-operative Security Environment Pillar organized and executed the “After OSLO 2008: Workshop on Cluster Munitions” from 8-11 February 2010, in co-operation with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and European Integration of the Republic of Croatia.

This was the second time that RACVIAC organized an activity related to Cluster Munitions. This workshop proved to have excellent timing, being held just prior to 16 February 2010, the date when Burkina Faso and Moldova deposited their means of ratification. With these two, the total number of ratifications reached 30, which means that the Convention on Cluster Munitions will enter into force on 1 August 2010 and become a legally binding international law.

2. PROGRAM/METHODOLOGY

The purpose of this Workshop was to enable the participants to acquaint themselves with the Convention on Cluster Munitions.

It comprised presentations, which provided the participants with all necessary information about the Convention and its aspects, followed by open discussions.

a) Workshop objectives were as follows:

- to inform the participants on various aspects of cluster munitions (specifically the technological characteristics and humanitarian impact);
- to inform the participants about the nature of the Convention (security and human rights issues);
- to provide a forum for discussion on the abovementioned issues in the context of disarmament and humanitarian law, with an eye to the growing effectiveness of non-traditional diplomacy.

b) Participation

Altogether 33 participants and lecturers, representing 21 countries or organizations, attended the Workshop. Participants came from: Albania (2), Bosnia and Herzegovina (1), Croatia (3), Germany (2), Hungary (1), Moldova (2), Slovenia (2), Spain (1), Turkey (2), Poland (1), and the United Kingdom (1).

The lecturers represented the following countries and organizations: Austrian Permanent Mission to the UN Office in Geneva, Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bosnia and Herzegovina Mine Action Centre, Croatian Mine Action Centre (CROMAC), Geneva International Centre for Humanitarian Demining (GIChD), International Rehabilitation Centre for Torture Victims (IRCT) in Zagreb, International Trust Fund
for Demining and Mine Victims Assistance (ITF) in Slovenia, Mine Aid from Croatia, Norwegian People’s Aid (NPA), UNDP and UN Mine Action Service (UNMAS).

c) Overview of the Workshop

Colonel Željko Cepanec, Deputy Director of RACVIAC, and Ambassador Davor Božinović, State Secretary for European Integration in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and European Integration of the Republic of Croatia, opened the workshop.

The workshop was divided into 3 main segments. The 1st segment examined the general background, problems and solutions. It consisted of the presentation of steps leading to the Convention on Cluster Munitions, introduction to cluster munitions and their impact, and to victim assistance.

Dr Dijana Pleština, Advisor to the Minister for Mine Action, Ministry of Foreign Affairs and European Integration of the Republic of Croatia, gave the opening remarks, stating the purpose and goals of the workshop. She was followed by Mr Christopher Clark (Senior Liaison and Programme Officer, United Nations Mine Action Service), who presented a solid picture of the cluster munitions used in operations in Kosovo and South Lebanon, as well as their disastrous consequences and key problems regarding their clearance.

In the end of 1st segment, Dr Cornelia Kratochvil (Counsellor for Military Affairs, Austrian Permanent Mission to the UN Office in Geneva) described the Convention on Cluster Munitions in the context of international humanitarian law, victim assistance and human rights law. She pointed out the importance of strong victim assistance and the necessity of wider approach in cases when whole communities are affected.

The 2nd segment focused on stockpile destruction. Mr Pjer Šimunović, State Secretary in the Ministry of Defence of the Republic of Croatia, briefed on the situation in his country regarding this issue.

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After Mr Šimunović’s briefing, it was time for the presentations on theoretical issues and examinations of on-the-ground experience in cluster munitions. Ms Vera Bohle (Senior Expert at Geneva International Centre for Humanitarian Demining) spoke about international standards in stockpile destruction, while Mr Lee Moroney (Programme Manager) from the Norwegian People’s Aid and Mr Colin King (Technical Weapons Consultant) from CKing Associates Ltd. presented NPA’s stockpile destruction support projects. Col Andrei Sarban (Chief Logistic Command – Deputy Commander, Main Staff of the National Army, Republic of Moldova) shared his experience with the destruction of cluster munitions in Moldova.

The 3rd segment started with a session on assistance, rehabilitation and reintegration of mine victims. The main speakers on this
subject were Zdenka Pantić (Director, International Rehabilitation Centre for Torture Victims, Croatia), Ms Anesa Kundurović (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Bosnia and Herzegovina) and Ms Marija Breber (Social Worker, Mine Aid, Croatia). They focused on psychological aspects of the impact of cluster munitions and on the victim assistance. In the following session, experts from Mine Action Centres in the region, Mr Miljenko Vahtarić (Assistant Director, Croatian Mine Action Centre) and Mr Zoran Grujić (Chief of Information Department, Bosnia and Herzegovina Mine Action Centre) presented their particular experiences, problems and lessons learned regarding their countries. In the last session, which covered the topic of international cooperation, Mr Hans Risser (Senior Advisor and Programme Manager, United Nations Development Programme, Croatia) and Mr Gregor Sančanin (Project Manager, International Trust Fund for Demining & Mine Victims Assistance) provided detailed insight into the position and role of their organization.

According to the participants’ assessments provided at the end of the event, the workshop proved to be successful, interesting and well organized. Generally, participants were satisfied with the chosen topics. All participants considered the workshop valuable for their future work and beneficial to the security in the region. Participants also agreed on the necessity of conducting similar kinds of workshops in the future.

The cooperation with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and European Integration of the Republic of Croatia was excellent. In particular, their contribution in the preparation of agenda and invitation of experienced lecturers was certainly the most important factor in the success of the workshop.

With the entry into force of the Convention on Cluster Munitions, the States Parties will have even more topics for discussions. Therefore, RACVIAC stands ready to continue the series of workshops on cluster munitions in the year 2011 for the benefit of the region.

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