Chemical Weapons Convention Seminar

Zagreb 21 - 23 February 2012

Organised in cooperation with the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons

Introduction

Pursuant to RACVIAC 2012 Programme, Cooperative and Security Environment with Focus on Arms Control Pillar organized and carried out the Seminar “Chemical Weapons Convention” (CSE-02-S) in the period from 21 - 23 Feb 2012. The Seminar, ninth so far, was co-organized with the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) as the follow up of the last Seminar on the Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC), which was held in RACVIAC in 2011.

The purpose of this Seminar was to discuss relevant issues related to the CWC. Its objectives were:
• To provide an overview of the CWC, its current tasks, activities and challenges;
• To update the participants on the OPCW activities in the field of assistance and protection against chemical weapons and toxic industrial chemicals in accordance with Article X of the CWC;
• To emphasize the importance of capacity building in the field of protection against a possible use of chemical weapons and toxic industrial chemicals, through projects on national and regional levels;
• To provide information about the evaluation and impact of the OPCW capability building training courses, CWC assistance / protection centres and regional networking as well as the Technical Secretariat preparedness for assistance and protection;
• To present information and lessons learned related to the third OPCW delivery of Assistance Exercise ASSISTEX 3, held in Tunisia in October 2010, and a Challenge Inspection Exercise;
• To provide an update on the issues related to the OPCW verification activities, inspection activities and procedures.

The participants who attended the Seminar came from the following countries: Albania (2), Bosnia and Herzegovina (3), Croatia (6), former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia (3), Hungary (2), Italy (1), Romania (1), Serbia (2) and Turkey (1). They were both senior and junior military and civilian recommendation makers dealing with the CWC issues, responsible for escorting inspections from the Secretariat of the OPCW. The content of this Seminar was of particular interest for the members of National Authorities dealing with declarations.

Seminar participants
The Seminar was conducted with the assistance of three (3) lecturers from the OPCW: Mr Alexander STUDENIKIN, Mr Daniel FEAKES and Ms Megan THOMAS.

During the 1st day (Tuesday, 21 February) the following topics were presented:

- **The CWC Article X: A short overview of the provisions of the CWC related to assistance and protection against chemical weapons (CW)** by Megan THOMAS, Project Officer, Assistance and Protection Branch, OPCW. This presentation was an overview of the CWC with an emphasis on Article X, including major achievements and challenges. It also covered the structure of the organization and its activities.

- **The recent events-activities of the Australia Group (AG) and the efforts in harmonizing export controls on chemical weapons (CW)** by H.E. Ms Beverly MERCER, Ambassador, Embassy of Australia to the Republic of Croatia. The Ambassador presented a brief overview of the Australia Group formed in 1985 with the aim of harmonizing both export controls on chemical weapons precursor chemicals and chemical production equipment-technologies which might be misused for CW purposes.

- **Evaluation and Impact of the OPCW capacity building training courses-CWC Assistance and Protection Centres and regional networking concept** by Mr Alex STUDENIKIN, Senior Assistance Protection Officer, OPCW. The two presentations informed the participants about theoretical and practical assistance/protection courses organized by the OPCW on regional or international levels according to the State Parties’ demand for training in the protection capabilities. For this reason, regional and sub-regional assistance and protection centres and the use of regional networking concept in the form of an effective regional emergency warning system are useful in the further development of the OPCW regional capability-building approach.

- **Training site (TS) preparedness for assistance and protection** by Mr Daniel FEAKES, Senior Policy Officer, Verification Division OPCW. The presentation provided the participants with details about the OPCW’s efforts in increasing the transparency of national programmes related to protective uses. It also

It was carried out as a combination of lectures and presentations followed by discussions, and two films at the end. This Seminar was designed with the aim of sharing expertise, opinions and lessons learned, identifying problems and finding possible solutions, as well as exploring the way ahead. The Seminar also provided a favorable environment and atmosphere for valuable and focused discussions.

**The Execution**

The CWC Seminar was opened on 21 February 2012 with a welcome address by RACVIA Director Ambassador Nikola TODORČEVSKI, followed by the keynote speech delivered by Alexander STUDENIKIN, Chief representative of the OPCW.
gave a brief overview of the databank on assistance and protection and the OPCW concept / developments with regard to the preparedness for the delivery of assistance (DA) operations in case of use or threat of use of chemical weapons.

During the 2nd day (Wednesday, 22 February) the following topics were presented:

- **The OPCW third delivery of assistance exercise ASSISTEX 3, Tunisia.** Annual exercises improve the OPCW’s reaction capabilities. The 2010 exercise Assistex 3 dealt with the threat and use of chemical weapons against a country (Tunisia). Both the presentation and the movie provided valuable information about the execution of the OPCW’s third delivery of assistance exercise ASSISTEX 3 and lessons learned there from.

- **OPCW Challenge Inspection Exercise.** The presentation served to emphasize the aims, facilities, challenges and procedures related to the OPCW inspections (Articles IV, V, VI).

- The end of the 2nd day was earmarked for the national representatives’ presentations and their respective national points of view on practical issues regarding controlling and declaring chemicals.

The final part of the Seminar was devoted to the evaluation of the Seminar and the Closing Ceremony.

**Conclusion**

Thanks to the cooperation between RACVIAC and the OPCW the presence of high-level instructors was ensured. Their professionalism and experience, as well as their presentations, were highly appreciated by the participants. The two films demonstrating the exercises proved to be particularly useful for all participants, since they provided them with valuable experience in the anticipation of “real” circumstances.

According to the participants’ evaluation provided at the end of the event, the Seminar was successful, very interesting and well organized. Most of the participants were members of the national authorities dealing with chemical weapons in their countries and they considered it valuable for their future work.

The participants were highly motivated during the Seminar and they showed deep interest in the subject matter. They expressed various ideas regarding the topics for possible future activities, which may prove to be a valuable source of needs assessment. In particular, they reinforced the need to introduce an additional practical phase of the Seminar and shorten the theoretical part, as it had already been covered during the previous seminars. The following topics were singled out as interesting for future seminars:

- Advanced training on Electronic Declaration Tool for National Authorities (EDNA) and the request for assistance by the OPCW in case of a CW attack;
- Discussion on control/proliferation of trade in chemical substances with the participation of the appropriate personnel apart from the State Parties’ representatives (i.e. customs personnel);
• Updated information about terrorism issues related to chemical, biological or radiological (CBR) substances and security measures;

• Report on the activities of the OPCW and State Parties thereto during 2012, with a special focus on the South East European (SEE) region, as well as the exchange of experiences and information.

These recommendations will certainly be taken into consideration by the co-organizers in the course of preparations for next year’s activity.

RACVIAC will continue to promote the CWC in all appropriate international and regional forums, as well as in its bilateral communications. It is the only multilateral treaty to ban an entire category of Weapons of Mass Destruction (WMD), to provide for international verification of their destruction and conversion of their production facilities to peaceful purposes, and to actively involve the world chemical industry in treaty negotiations and ongoing verification.

Finally, the CWC promotes the international cooperation and coordination in the peaceful use of chemicals and in protection against chemical weapon attacks or threats. However, it needs to be continually adapted to evolving circumstances, since CWs, as part of a wider area of hazardous materials, are being increasingly used by criminal organizations or terrorists. The CWC is a universal, non-discriminatory, verifiable and enforceable model for multilateral undertakings to build global consensus on security through arms control, create confidence and deter treaty violations.

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* Turkey recognizes the Republic of Macedonia with its constitutional name