Abstract

RACVIAC’s Security Sector Reform (SSR) programme for the mid-term period is, among other things, aimed at covering the topics of gender and human rights protection.

The protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms has its legal basis in the United Nations (UN) Charter (1945) and the UN Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948) adopted by the UN Security Council Resolution (UNSCR) 217. Gender aspects are based on the UNSCR 1325 and 1820, European Convention on Human Rights (Council of Europe 1950) and other regional instruments in Europe.

The implementation of human rights protection on national level continues to be an important political obligation, not only for the South East European (SEE) countries in the process of security sector reform, but also for the world as a whole.

The promotion of equal opportunities remains a big challenge for independent state institutions in their joint efforts to eliminate discrimination.
**Activity Background**

The Round Table on SSR and gender is the first one in a series of similar events. The purpose of the Round Table was twofold.

Firstly, it aimed to bring together the representatives from the SEE to discuss relevant general information on standards guiding the SSR and gender with a main focus on the UNSCR 1325 and 1820, European standards and regional instruments in Europe.

Secondly, it aimed to encourage the participants from parliaments, ministries and NGOs from the SEE countries to share their experiences in implementing Action Plans with measures to strengthen the role of women, prevent and resolve armed conflicts, establish and maintain peace, including measures to prevent sexual violence against women and girls and to protect them after armed conflicts.

Main objectives of the Round Table were:
- To address relevant information on history and standards of human rights and fundamental freedoms guiding SSR and gender;
- To highlight the gender perspective in UN programming and reporting, as well as in peace support operations;
- To develop a gender perspective training in peace support operations;
- To give an overview of the participation and representation of women at different levels of the decision-making process and to promote their involvement in politics;
- To direct the attention of participants to specific protection needs of women and girls in the conflict areas, with a focus on the importance of awareness and education of women in the conflict areas;
- To present a gender perspective in the post-conflict processes;
- To give the SEE countries an opportunity to share their experiences in implementing programmes on strengthening the role of women - national presentations focused on the SSR and gender issue.

**Activity Venue, Duration and Participation**

The Round Table, organised in cooperation with the Ministry of Defence (MoD) of the Republic of Slovenia, was held from 20 to 22 March 2012 at the facilities of the Doctrine, Development, Education and Training Command (DDE & TC) in Maribor. It was organized as a three-day event. On the first day, at the opening dinner held in Rakitje, Croatia, participants were welcomed by Colonel Željko Cepanec, Deputy Director of RACVIAC – Centre for Security Cooperation. The Slovenian MoD hosted a welcome dinner...
on the second day at the “Bau” Restaurant. There were a total of 33 participants at the Round Table, 11 of whom were lecturers.

**Activity Description and Contents**

The first working day started with the opening remarks given by Mr Peter Stavanja, State Secretary, MoD, Republic of Slovenia, Colonel Željko Cepanec, Deputy Director of RACVIAC, Brigadier Bojan Pograjc, M.Sc., Commandant of the Doctrine, Development, Education and Training Command, Slovenian Armed Forces (SAF) and Mr Tomaž Kancler, M.Sc., Deputy Major of Maribor.

Participants had the honour of listening to an excellent expose on “Human Rights Protection as a Basic Element for Security Sector Reform and Gender” given by Ms Zdenka Čebašek-Travnik, Ph.D., Human Rights Ombudsman, Republic of Slovenia. Ms Marina Pendeš, Deputy Minister, Ministry of Defence, Bosnia and Herzegovina, and Ms Ivis Nocka from the Ministry of Defence of Albania were the following two keynote speakers.

In the afternoon session, four interesting presentations were delivered. The first one, entitled “Military Career: Commander of Mechanized Battalion in Slovenian Armed Forces”, was given by Lieutenant Colonel Alenka Petek, Commander of the 74th Motorized Battalion, SAF, MoD, Republic of Slovenia. The main objective of her presentation was to present personal aspects on the decision to pursue a military career. Lieutenant Colonel Alenka Petek’s colleague, Colonel Milan Kranjec, moderated the session.

The presentation “Experiences with Implementing Human Rights Protection in Armed Forces / Slovenian Case” was given by Ms Breda Bunič. She shared some experiences of the Slovenian Parliament, Ministry of Defence and Ministry of Interior in relation to the role of women in Armed Forces (Military and Police) and women’s participation in Peace Support Operations (PSO).
The first day programme was closed by an academically-oriented lecture on "National, European and International Human Rights Protection Systems" given by professor Rajko Knez, Ph.D., University of Maribor. His lecture aimed to identify the institutions competent for human rights protection, human rights procedures (national and international), and acts aiming to protect human rights.

Subsequent discussion focused on the interplay among different legal systems (international, national and EU legal systems) using different legal bases, the role of international protection of human rights in national proceedings, and analysis of some examples of poor practice in order to avoid future mistakes.

The second day started with a very interesting presentation "Military Career: Personal Experiences from UN Peace Support Missions (India, Pakistan) - Croatian Armed Forces" delivered by Captain Marija Čičak who currently works as a Public Relations Officer in RACVIAC – Centre for Security Cooperation. Later on, a lively discussion was developed, as participants were eager to hear more about Captain Čičak’s personal aspects and experiences in the aforementioned Peace Support Missions.

Her presentation was followed by that given by Staff Sergeant Vera Ivezić, the second speaker from RACVIAC – Centre for Security Cooperation, also a member of the Croatian Armed Forces (CAF). The title of her interesting presentation was “Training and Education on UNSCR 1325 and 1820.” She gave an overview of the education programme on the implementation of UNSCR 1325 and 1820 in the CAF. A subsequent discussion focused on the practical results of this educational programme.

The morning presentations were followed by a presentation entitled “Implementation of the UNSCR 1325 (Governance, Peace and Stability: Women, Poverty and Economy)”, delivered by Ms Maja Marjanović, National Project Coordinator, UNSCR 1325 Project in Bosnia and Herzegovina. Ms Marjanovic explained the role of women in the areas of governance, peace and stability, as well as the connection between women, poverty, economy and the implementation of UNSCR 1325 in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

An interesting presentation on the main goals and responsibilities of the Office for Equal Opportunities was made by Ms Violeta Neubauer, a representative of the Government Office for Equal Opportunities, the Republic of Slovenia. In the second part of her presentation she focused on some issues related to both, women and men.
The programme was followed by the presentations on National Plans.

**Conclusions and Recommendations**

At the end of the programme, participants shared their impressions and some interesting ideas on the topic of the Round Table. Their impressions were summarised by Colonel Željko Cepanec and Brigadier Bojan Pograjc, and include the following:

- recommendations to continue with similar events focused on the issues of human rights and fundamental freedoms in Armed Forces;
- Recognition of RACVIAC as an appropriate platform to execute similar future events and to continue international cooperation in the SEE on more specific issues of gender and SSR;
- The level of information exchange on the implementation of UNSCR 1325 and 1820 was recognised as the most important output and benefit of the Round Table;
- The importance of educational programmes promoting equal opportunities and human rights;
- The need for continuous provision of equal opportunities as a core part of human rights through policy papers, strategies and legislation.

Due to the fact that in the light of UNSCR 1325 implementation gender issue is high on the agenda of all international organizations, such as NATO, EU, OSCE, and initiatives and organizations in the region of South East Europe, it would be highly beneficial to further address gender issues in future RACVIAC events, as well as to initiate placing that issue on the SEECP agenda for 2013.
Signature list - External report  
RACVIAC’s activity SSR-08-RT

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