Abstract

This was the second time that RACVIAC SSR Pillar has address one of the important and intriguing issues high on the agenda of global and national organisations and authorities, the issue of gender equality. The purpose of the round table was two-fold. Firstly, it aimed to bring together representatives from South Eastern Europe and provide them with relevant general information on the standards guiding Security Sector Reform and gender with a main focus on the UN Security Council Resolutions 1325 and 1820, 2004 OSCE Action Plan, European standards and regional instruments for promoting gender equality. Secondly, it aimed to encourage participants from parliaments, ombudsman institutions, ministries, governments and NGOs from the SEE countries to present their experiences in implementing Action Plans with measures for strengthening the role of women in the public sector.

Activity Background

The protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms is legally based on the UN Charter (1945) and the UN Universal Declaration of Human Rights
adopted and proclaimed by General Assembly Resolution 217. Gender aspects are based on the UN Security Council Resolutions 1325 and 1820, European Convention on Human Rights (Council of Europe 1950), 2004 OSCE Action Plan for the Promotion of Gender Equality and other regional instruments in Europe. Implementation of human rights protection on the national level is an important political obligation, not only for the SEE countries, but also beyond. Promoting equal opportunities for women and men remains a big challenge for independent state institutions in their efforts to work together towards eliminating discrimination, especially at the time of economic and financial crisis and its effects on gender issues.

In March 2012, in cooperation with the Ministry of Defence of the Republic of Slovenia, RACVIAC organised the first in a series of events on the mentioned topic – a Round Table entitled “SSR and Gender: Implementation of the UN SCR 1325 and 1820”. The round table took place in DDETC “Kadetnica”, Maribor, SI.

**Activity Facilitators**

The round table was planned by RACVIAC and executed with the support and cooperation of the Croatian Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs.

**Activity Venue, Duration and Participation**

The opening of the round took place at the Croatian Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs, while subsequent sessions were conducted in RACVIAC. The event started with a welcome dinner on 12th March 2013. It continued for the following two working days and was officially closed on 14th March 2013. This round table brought together a total of 39 participants, of which 25 nominated by 6 RACVIAC member countries and Slovenia.

The eight participating country was the Kingdom of Belgium, represented by HE Nancy Rossignol, Ambassador to Croatia. The round table saw a fine blend of participants dealing with equality issues in their respective ministries or agencies and presenters who by virtue of their duties covered the full spectrum of institutional approach to gender equality, which is an accomplishment RACVIAC feels very proud of.

Our pleasure for having hosted them as well as our gratitude for their active participation is hereby expressed to Mr Mirko Okolic, Deputy Minister, MoD Bosnia and Herzegovina, Ms Visnja Ljubicic, Croatian Ombudsperson for Gender Equality and Ms Melita Mulic, member of the Croatian Parliamentary Committees for Gender Equality and Human Rights and Minorities.
The participation of Ms Ankica Tomic, Head of Department for International Cooperation, Ministry of Security, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Ms Heather Huhtanen, Project Coordinator, DCAF, Geneva, Mr Ivan Zverzhanovski, SESAC Coordinator, UNDP/SEESAC, Belgrade, Mr Adnan Kadribasis, Legal Advisor, Agency for Gender Equality of Bosnia and Herzegovina and Ms Maja Bjelos, BCSP, Belgrade, RS, also deserves a mention.

Last but not least, we were pleased to see the representatives of the civil society; Ms Rada Boric, Director, Centre for Women’s Studies, Zagreb, HR, Ms Mary Ann Rukavina Cipetic, Executive Director, Gender Task Force, Zagreb, HR and Ms Maja Dubovic, Documenta, Zagreb, HR.

Activity Description and Content

On the first day, there was a welcome gathering and dinner hosted by H.E. Ambassador Branimir Mandic, Director of RACVIAC, and Brigadier General Zdravko Jakop, Deputy Director of RACVIAC. The working part of the round table started at the Croatian Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs with the opening remarks given by Ms Vesna Batistic Kos, MAG Chairperson and Assistant Minister and H.E. Ambassador Branimir Mandic, Director of RACVIAC.

Opening speeches were also given by H.E. Nancy Rossignol, Belgian Ambassador to Croatia and Ms Visnja Ljubicic, Croatian Ombudsperson for Gender Equality. Subsequently, the first working day saw two sessions of potent presentations. The first one focused on the institutionalised aspect of the implementation of Gender Equality with the presentations given by Mr Mirko Okolic, Deputy Minister, MoD Bosnia and Herzegovina, Ms Visnja Ljubicic, Croatian Ombudsperson for Gender Equality and Ms Melita Mulic, member of the Croatian Parliamentary Committees for Gender Equality and for Human Rights and Minorities. The second one covered the topics of international experience in the domain of Gender Equality and the presentations were
delivered by Ms Heather Huhtanen, Project Coordinator, DCAF, Geneva, and Ms Lidija Georgieva, Ph.D., University Ss. Cyril and Metodius, Skopje, MK.

The second working day was devoted to the developments within the framework of national Gender Equality Action Plans and training. Substantial and thus useful presentations were given by Mr Beno Arnejcic, Ph.D., Primorska University, Koper, SI, Mr Adnan Kadribasic from The Gender Equality Agency of Bosnia and Herzegovina, Mr Ivan Zverzhanovski, SESAC Coordinator, UNDP/SEESAC, Belgrade, RS, Ms Maja Bjelos, BCSP, Belgrade, RS, Ms Ankica Tomic, Ministry of Security, BA and Ms Rada Boric, Director, Centre for Women’s Studies, Zagreb, HR.

As it was hoped for, this second event on gender equality brought together more profiled participants and confirmed the importance of discussing the problems related to gender equality. Since the participation in the national decision-making process can be viewed as a kind of barometer for the implementation of gender equality principles, it could be said here that it is not only the SEE region that needs to invest much more efforts and hard work to achieve the goals of gender equality.

Concluding remarks and future actions

The main goals of the second Round Table on SSR and Gender: Implementation of the UN SCR 1325 and 1820 were fully achieved. Through the discussions the UN SCR 1325 and 1820 were recognised as important tools for policy making and mainstreaming of gender perspective in regional policies and strategies. It was agreed that the lessons and experiences should be shared in the future as well.

The implementation of human rights protection on the national level is still an important political obligation, not only for the SEE countries. Promoting equal opportunities remains a big challenge for the independent state institutions in their efforts to work together towards eliminating discrimination, especially at the time of economic and financial crisis and its effects on gender issues in the future.
The presentations and discussions in the course of the round table on SSR and gender demonstrated the need to continue with these common efforts in 2014. In this context, it is necessary to highlight the idea, expressed by the representative from the Agency for Gender Equality in Bosnia and Herzegovina, to organise in cooperation with RACVIAC the next event in this series of Gender Equality activities in 2014. RACVIAC, as the centre for security cooperation in SEE, is more than ready to support all aspects of the implementation of regional cooperation in the area of gender and SSR. This is in line with the idea of enhancing regional cooperation and implementation of National Action Plans on gender issues. RACVIAC will continue supporting all aspects of the implementation of the UN SCR 1325 and 1820 by strengthening regional cooperation in SEE on this very important issue in the area of human rights protection.