Conference "Gender in Border Management/Peace and Security: Promoting Women's Role"

SSR-11-RT
19-20 May 2013

Abstract: As one of its major fields of interest, RACVIAC SSR mid-term programme aims to address the protection and promotion of human rights, gender equality and the role of women. Thus, this was the first event tackling specific aspects of the broader gender agenda. At the outset, this Conference clarified why gender was so important for the border management.

The integration of gender issues into border management reform processes enhances operational effectiveness by: improving the prevention and detection of human trafficking and smuggling, strengthening the protection and promotion of human rights, creating more representative border management institutions and enhancing local ownership, oversight and collaboration.

In providing border control, the activities can have potentially positive and negative consequences for the relevant actors, the local population in the area of operation, the general security environment, the enjoyment of human rights and the rule of law.

To ensure a higher level of human rights protection and the rule of law as the responsibility of border management institutions, an effective and gender-responsive human trafficking training has to be established and the recruitment of women in border management agencies enhanced, which leads directly into the battleground of the UNSCR 1325 and related Resolutions.
Activity Background

The purpose of this activity on Border Management and Gender and Women in Peace & Security was twofold.

Firstly, it aimed to bring together representatives from South East Europe (SEE) and provide them with relevant general information on the new trends in border management deriving from the needs of the SEE countries, as viewed through the implementation of international (UN, EU, NATO) policies and resolutions within the process of Euro-Atlantic integration.

Secondly, the event provided an opportunity for the participants from ombudsman institutions and human rights protection institutions, ministries of internal affairs, ministries of security, representatives of NGOs, as well as experts from various national institutions and think-thanks to exchange relevant information on the subject matter.

Activity Facilitators

The Conference was planned by RACVIAC and executed in coordination with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Bosnia and Herzegovina.

Activity Venue, Duration and Participation

The event started with a welcome dinner on 19th May 2013 and officially closed the next day.

This Conference brought together a total of 33 participants from 5 MAG countries as well as participants from NATO HQ Sarajevo and SEESAC - Belgrade. The importance of the Conference subject matter was additionally supported by the participation of Ms Ana Trisic-Babic, Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs of Bosnia and Herzegovina, Ms Vesna Batistic-Kos, Assistant Minister of Foreign and European Affairs of Croatia, Ms Vesna Krstovic-Spremo, Member of Gender Equality Committee of Parliamentary Assembly of Bosnia and Herzegovina and Ms Visnja Ljubicic, Ombudsperson for Gender Equality of Croatia.

The Conference, as well as RACVIAC's gender-based activity conducted in March this year, saw an excellent combination 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. This time the event addressed gender-based issues as experienced in Peace Support Operations (PSO).
This topic was covered by Ms Zvjezdana Ararankovic, the BiH Border Police Unit, who elaborated on her tour of duty in Sudan, Col Harald Hiort, Deputy Commander, NATO HQ Sarajevo, who talked about gender and leadership and his fellow co-worker Ms Vanja Matic, Gender Programme Manager, who focused on NATO and implementation of UNSCR 1325.

The participation of Ms Ankica Tomic, Head of Department for International Cooperation, Ministry of Security, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Ms Danijela Djurovic, Project Officer/Advisor UNDP/SEESAC and Ms Didem Zeynep, 1st Counsellor, Embassy of Turkey to Croatia also deserves our full recognition.

Last but not least, we were pleased to host participants from the Police Academy, Zagreb.

Activity Description and Content

On the arrival day, Conference participants were welcomed at a dinner hosted by H.E. Ambassador Branimir Mandic, Director of RACVIAC, and Brigadier General Zdravko Jakop, RACVIAC Deputy Director.

After RACVIAC Director’s opening remarks, the working day of the Conference was continued by framing the UNSCR 1325 and related resolutions by Ms Vesna Batistic Kos, Assistant Minister of Foreign and European Affairs of the Republic of Croatia and MAG Chairperson, and Ms Ana Trisic-Babic, Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs of Bosnia and Herzegovina.

As it was hoped for, this third event on gender equality brought together more profiled participants and confirmed the importance of discussing problems related to gender equality. Since participation in national decision-making processes can be viewed as a kind of barometer for the implementation of gender equality principles, it can be concluded that it is not only the SEE region that needs to invest much more effort into achieving the goals of gender equality.

Concluding remarks and future actions

The main goals of the Conference “Gender in Border Management/Peace and Security: Promoting Women’s Role” were fully achieved.

In view of the future challenges and requirements concerning the EU enlargement to the SEE countries, the integration of gender issues into border management reform processes is one of the most important issues faced by national institutions responsible for border management.
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 independent state institutions in their efforts to work together towards eliminating discrimination, especially at the time of the economic and financial crisis and their effects on gender issues in the future.

The presentations and discussions during the Conference on Gender in Border Management demonstrated the need to continue with these common efforts in 2014. Because of the impacts of the EU enlargement on the SEE countries in 2013 it will be necessary to familiarize border guards in the SEE region with the standards of Shenghen border control with gender as one of the most important issues.

It was agreed that the lessons and experiences should be shared in the future as well. 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. As the centre for security cooperation, RACVIAC 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 the SEE on this extremely important issue in the area of human rights protection.