Introduction

This year’s event is built on the experience of the last year’s Symposium and its purpose was to present the latest developments in arms control, both conventional and non-conventional arms control treaties as well as the different conventions. The event served as a platform for discussions on the fundamental role of arms control treaties as a cornerstone of European and SEE security.

The objectives were to present updates and new developments since the last AC Symposium, to discuss current challenges, to talk about the future of arms control in the region and beyond and to gather the heads of the verification centers in order to discuss CSE activities in 2016.

The participants who attended the Symposium came from the following countries: AL (3) BA (4), HR (4), DE (2), ME (3), MK (3), RS (2), RU (1), TR (1) and Kosovo* (2) and OSCE Mission to BA (2). The lecturers provided great input in the actual discussions and came from the Federal Republic of Germany, Republic of Croatia and RACVIAC while the keynote speaker was LtCol Janus KASCHTA, Defence Attaché to the Republic of Croatia in the Embassy of the Federal Republic of Germany.

Execution

The Symposium began on 3 December 2015 with a welcome address by RACVIAC Deputy Director Brigadier General Zdravko JAKOP, followed by opening remarks given by LtCol Janus KASCHTA, Defence Attaché to the Republic of Croatia in the Embassy of the Federal Republic of Germany. Both speakers stressed the importance of this event that brings together true experts in the region and gives them the opportunity to share information and talk about current issues regarding arms control.
Arms Control Symposium

**LtCol Janus KASCHTA, Opening remarks**

Topics presented prior to the national presentations were aimed at opening questions and facilitating discussions and to give an overview of the current developments regarding certain arms control treaties.

- **The Transformation of Armed Forces and Its Impact on the Vienna Document**
  by LtCol Olaf GRÜNTER, Chief of Policy Advice/Concept Development Section, Bundeswehr Verification Centre
  
  LtCol Gründer first stated what the current threats to security in Europe are and pointed out how the armed forces and arms control treaties could be modified for better adaptation. Concerning the Vienna Document ’11 per se he concluded that the way ahead lies in providing appropriate transparency and predictability, in giving answers to the new practice of holding exercises (thresholds, snap exercises) and in providing an information exchange which reflects the current realities.

- **Non-conventional arms control: proliferation aspects**
  by Ms Ivana Barbara BLAŽEVIĆ, Head of the Arms Control department of HR and C-WMD Network leader
  
  In this presentation the main focus was put on the proliferation aspects of the treaties as this topic is nowadays more topical than ever due to the turbulent situation in the field of security in the region and beyond. Ms Blažević also informed the participants about the C-WMD Network’s events in RACVIAC, the work that has been done so far as well as the future plans.

- **Chemical Weapons Convention – national requirements and cooperation**
  by Ms Mirna MARAVIĆ, Senior advisor, Ministry of Economy, HR
  
  This presentation covered the non-conventional treaties and Ms Maravić provided a deeper insight into the Chemical Weapons Convention and all the requirements that the states need to fulfill but also stressed the importance of the cooperation needed for full implementation of the convention, not just in one country alone but, rather, among several different countries.

The afternoon session was reserved for national presentations and a discussion. The main aim of the national presentations was to give an overview of the main activities and accomplishments from the last Arms Control Symposium in RACVIAC in 2014. The opportunity was given to the OSCE Mission to Bosnia and Herzegovina to give an overview of their activities during the preceding year.

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

On Friday, 4 December, an annual meeting of the Heads of the Verification centres was held which was attended by the representatives of AL, HR, BA, ME, MK, RS as well as the representatives of the Turkish Verification Centre. The CSE
Programme Manager Col Muharrem Gülcan presented the Pillar’s programme for 2016. Afterwards the main focus was put on the activities such as the Dayton Article IV Course, Vienna Document Course and Open Skies Course and their execution.

Conclusion
According to the feedback received via the RACVIAC questionnaire both academic and administrative issues received an excellent grade.

Some of the proposals for the next year that will be taken into consideration are:
- Enable more time for discussion of further developments of VD’11
- Include topics related to disposal and security upgrades of arms/ammo on the Agenda
- Include topics regarding the international legal framework and domestic work of the national authorities to ratify legal binding documents on the Agenda
- Include the presence of different international organizations dealing with arms control
- Widen the topics related to non-conventional treaties
- Host two events per year if necessary

For the next years’ Symposium more focus will be put on discussions under the Chatham House rules. As we annually gather experts from the region (Heads of the Arms Control department in MoDs and MFAs, Heads of the Verification Centres) the intention is to give the opportunity to our participants to address the issues they think are of importance in the Arms Control area. RACVIAC will continue to be a facilitator for future discussions and gather experts from the region and beyond.

This event proved to be a good example of a traditional and popular activity of the RACVIAC CSE Pillar which will definitely remain an annual platform for future discussions about arms control and security issues.

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*This Designation is without prejudice to positions on status and is in line with UNSCR 1244 and the ICJ Opinion on the Kosovo Declaration of Independence*