Introduction

The aim of this year’s Symposium was to follow the latest developments after last year's Symposium and to present the latest developments in Arms Control as well as to give an opportunity to the participants to present the national developments but also the challenges and needs of the countries. 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 talk about the future of Arms Control in the region and beyond and to gather the Heads of the Verification Centres in order to discuss CSE activities in 2017.

The participants who attended the Symposium came from the following countries: AL (2), BA (3), HR (5), DE (1), ES (2), HU (1), ME (1), MK (1), RO (1), RS (1), RU (1), US (1), Kosovo* (2) and OSCE BA (2). The lecturers came from the Federal Republic of Germany (2), Montenegro (1) and the moderator of the discussion came from the Republic of Serbia (1). The total number of lecturers and participants was 28.

The Symposium also provided a favourable environment and atmosphere for really valuable and focused discussions.

Execution

The Symposium began on 8 November 2016 with a Welcome address by RACVIAC Director Ambassador Haydar Berk, followed by the Opening remarks given by Mr Marcus Bleinroth, Head of Division, Conventional Disarmament, Arms Control and CSBM, Preventive Arms Control, Ministry of Foreign Affairs 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.

Mr Marcus Bleinroth, Opening remarks

The 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 role of Arms Control in resolving the remaining security issues in Europe by LtCol Emil SCHREIBER, SecChief International Cooperation, BwVC

LtCol Schreiber first presented the work and area of responsibilities of the German Verification Centre. He then moved on to the topic of the Conventional armed forces in Europe, stressing the current situation regarding the updates of the treaties and challenges. (CFE; Vienna Document’11 and Open skies).

- Sub-regional Arms Control and CSBMS presented by Col Dražen BOŽOVIĆ, Head of the Verification Centre of Montenegro

In this presentation the main focus was put on the disarmament and Confidence and Security-Building Measures with special focus on the Sub-Regional Arms Control Agreement. After a brief history of the Agreement and the aftermaths of Agreement implementation were presented it was stated that there is a possibility of using this Agreement as a model for resolving other regional conflicts. Due to the non-functioning of the CFE, and problems in the implementation of the VD 2011, it might be possible to apply such an Agreement to restrict arms in crisis areas, it was stressed. It should be kept in mind that there are specificities when it comes to each region and that such an Agreement should be modified accordingly as it has proved to be a good post-conflict mechanism.

The afternoon session was reserved for national presentations and a discussion moderated by Ambassador Branka Latinović (RT), Former Director of Directorate of Arms Control, Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Serbia. 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 2015. An opportunity was given to the OSCE Mission to Bosnia and Herzegovina to give an overview of their activities during the preceding year.

Symposium participants

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

On Wednesday, 9 December, an annual meeting of the Heads of the Verification centres was held which was attended by the representatives of AL, HR, BA, ES, HU
ME, MK, RO and RS. The meeting was chaired by Brigadier General Gordana Garašić, RACVIAC Deputy Director. The aim was to talk about future activities RACVIAC is conducting in cooperation with the Verification centres.

**Conclusion**

According to the feedback received via the RACVIAC Questionnaire both academic and administrative issues of the Symposium were very well rated.

Herewith are some of the proposals for next year that will be taken into consideration:

- Future topics: more emphasis should be put on the challenges during the implementation process and possible recommendations for the regimes improvements
- Enable more time for discussion of further developments of VD’11
- National presentations as well as the discussion panel - could be useful to keep it as a standard part of the Symposium
- Participation quota should be fulfilled by the Members - try to gather a more diversified structure of participants

- More up-to-date topics with focus on the way ahead
- Widen the topics related to non-conventional treaties
- Change the date.

In the Symposium that will be held next year more focus will be put on discussions. We will strive to gather relevant speakers who will present current Arms Control issues and try to provoke an honest discussion among the participants. Participants coming to the Symposium are already experts in this field (they come from Verification centres, ministries of defence and ministries of foreign affairs) and RACVIAC will continue to be a facilitator of expert discussions as well as a platform for meetings and idea exchange.

The next Arms Control Symposium will be hosted by Bosnia and Herzegovina and the intention is to consider changing the date of the Symposium. Instead of the last quarter of the year it would be useful to hold it in the middle of the year due to international and national obligations that majority of participants have at the end of the year.

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