 CENTRE FOR SECURITY COOPERATION  
Cooperative and Security Environment with Focus on  
Arms Control Pillar

SEMINAR ON THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE  
CONVENTION ON CLUSTER MUNITIONS

Co-organized with the  
Office for Mine Action of the Government of the Republic of Croatia

14-16 November 2016, Rakitje, Republic of Croatia


Introduction

The Convention on Cluster Munitions was opened for signature in Oslo, Kingdom of Norway, on 2 December 2008. By February 2010, 30 ratification procedures that were required were completed and the Convention entered into force on 1 August 2010, thereby becoming an international legally binding document.

With a view to encouraging the States Parties to the Convention to fulfil their international obligations under the Convention and recognizing the need for international cooperation and assistance,

RACVIAC - Centre for Security Cooperation (hereinafter: RACVIAC) and its partner decided to co-organize a Seminar on the implementation of the Convention in South-Eastern Europe.

The purpose of this Seminar was to share the latest developments related to the implementation of the Convention on Cluster Munitions.

The Seminar provided an opportunity for all those involved or interested in the topic of cluster munitions to broaden their range of contacts with the interested parties from both the private and the public sector, on both the national and the international level, by sharing their experiences and problems, both technological and managerial.

The participants (14) came from the following countries: Republic of Albania (2), Australia (1), Bosnia and Herzegovina (2), Canada (2), Republic of Croatia (1), the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia* (2), Ireland (1), Italian Republic (1), The Netherlands (1), and Japan (1). The event was honoured by the presence of the Ambassadors of Australia, Ireland and The Netherlands to Croatia, i.e., HE Susan Cox, HE Olive Hempenstall and HE Ellen Berends, who delivered Opening remarks to the audience.
The participants were mostly both senior and junior military officials and civilians dealing with related issues.

The Seminar was conducted with the assistance of ten lecturers: HE Henk Cor van der Kwast (Permanent Representative of the Netherlands to the Conference on Disarmament, Disarmament Ambassador at large at the Permanent Representation of the Kingdom of the Netherlands, Geneva), Col Giulio Botto (Director of the Noceto Military Facility, Italian Army), Mr Hrvoje Debač (Acting Director of the Office for Mine Action of the Government of the Republic of Croatia), Mr Goran Zdrale (Senior officer for analyzing and reporting, Bosnia and Herzegovina Mine Action Centre), Ms Sheila Mweemba (Director of the Implementation Support Unit of the Convention on Cluster Munitions), Mr Miljenko Vahšćić (Assistant Director, CROMAC), LtCol Marijan Jozić (Senior Advisor for Non-Conventional Arms, MoD HR), Mr Dražen Šimunović (Head of Department for Mine Risk Education, CROMAC), Mr Miroslav Pisarević (Project Manager of Humanitarian Disarmament Programme, Republic of Serbia, Norwegian People’s Aid), and Cdr. (GEN) Wolfgang Heuer (Desk Officer, Arms Control, MoD DE).

It was carried out as a combination of lectures and presentations, followed by questions and answers and short panels intended for discussion. This Seminar was designed with the goal to share expertise, experience and information. The Seminar also provided a favourable environment and atmosphere for valuable and focused discussions.

Execution

The Seminar began on 15 November 2016 with the Welcome address by the Director of RACVIAC, Ambassador Haydar Berk, followed by the Opening remarks by the Acting Director of the Office for Mine Action of the Government of the Republic of Croatia, Mr Hrvoje Debač, and the Ambassadors, and by a lecture given by Ms Sheila Mweemba, Director of the Implementation Support Unit of the Convention on Cluster Munitions, titled “Implementation of the CCM Dubrovnik Action Plan: Achievements and Challenges.”

After the opening presentations the floor was given to Ambassador Henk Cor van der Kwast, Permanent Representative of the Netherlands to the Conference on Disarmament, Disarmament Ambassador at large at the Permanent Representation of the Kingdom of the Netherlands (Geneva) as the second presenter. Ambassador van der Kwast gave a comprehensive overview of the results of the Sixth Meeting of the States Parties to the Convention on Cluster Munition.
The next presenters, Mr Miljenko Vahtarić, Assistant Director of CROMAC, Mr Goran Zdrale, Senior officer for analysing and reporting from the Bosnia and Herzegovina Mine Action Centre, and Mr Miroslav Pisarević, Project Manager of the Humanitarian Disarmament Programme (Republic of Serbia), the Norwegian People’s Aid, informed the participants, under the subtitle “Clearance of Cluster Munitions and its Remnants in the Countries of South East Europe – Mine Action Centres’ Role”, about their recent experiences regarding the issue, the practices and developments. This panel was excellently moderated by Ms Sheila Mweemba.

At the end of the first working day, after the national presentations (AL, MK) the floor was given to Cdr. (GEN) Wolfgang Heuer of the MoD DE. The title of his presentation was “Cluster Munitions: Stockpile Destruction”. Director Colonel Ing. Giulio Botto from the Italian Army gave the presentation “Destroying Cluster Munitions Stockpiles: The Italian Experience”, emphasizing the importance of the industrial destruction of the cluster munitions contrary to the method of using open detonation. Both lecturers detailed and illustrated technical explanations and certain aspects were very much appreciated by the audience, which consisted mainly of technical experts.

The audience in both cases got an overview of the details regarding the destruction facility, the destruction process, the cluster munitions themselves, the financial side, the destruction technologies and, last but not least, the risks and lessons learned.

The morning session of the second working day (16 November) was reserved for two lecturers from the Republic of Croatia: the first one for LtCol Marijan Jozić, Senior Advisor for Non-Conventional Arms at the MoD HR, who gave the presentation “Cluster Munitions and Ammunition Management in the Croatian Armed Forces”, and the second one for Mr Dražen Šimunović, Head of Department for Mine Risk Education and Victim Assistance at the Croatian Mine Action Center – CROMAC. Though the latter presentation (“Definition of Suspected Hazardous Area contaminated by cluster bomblets KB-1”) was in Croatian this didn’t hamper the participants’ understanding of the subject as the presentation was distributed in the English hardcopy version and Mr Hrvoje Debač assisted as an expert interpreter during the following Q&A section. Before the Evaluation and Closing ceremony parts, the session was closed by 1st Lt Ilija Mikić, who gave an overview of the situation in Bosnia and Herzegovina.
Conclusion

According to the feedback received, the participants - notwithstanding the fact that participants from Montenegro, Republic of Serbia, Romania and Republic of Turkey were missing - were highly satisfied with the execution of the Seminar and found it very interesting and very well organized.

Thanks to the cooperation between RACVIAC and the co-organiser and partner The Office for Mine Action of the Government of the Republic of Croatia, high-level lecturers took part in this Seminar. Their professionalism and experience, as well as their presentations, were highly appreciated by all participants.

Most of the participants were members of national authorities dealing with relevant issues in their countries and they considered it valuable for their future work.

The participants were highly motivated during the Seminar and they showed deep interest in the subject matter.

This event proved to be a good example of strong cooperation between RACVIAC and the Office for Mine Action of the Government of the Republic of Croatia. RACVIAC, in cooperation with its partner in this successful event, will continue to promote the issue of the prohibition of cluster munitions with all of the means it has at its disposal.

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* Republic of Turkey recognizes the Republic of Macedonia with its constitutional name.