Cooperative Security Environment with Focus on Arms Control Pillar

“Chemical Weapons Convention Workshop”
CSE-C1-W-18

05-08 February 2018, Rakitje, Zagreb, Republic of Croatia

Introduction

The aim of the Workshop was to discuss relevant issues related to the Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC) and provide a broad overview of the CWC implementation procedures with a special focus on the different aspects, and measures in implementing the Convention. This year the main focus was on the issue of „Understanding Non-Proliferation in the CWC Context.“ The Workshop aimed to explore the tools to enforce non-proliferation, the issues of verification and inspection as well as the possible means of assistance and cooperation. Furthermore, the event provided a forum for the countries of the region to present their national CWC-implementation related programmes in and to exchange information, discuss problematic issues and find possible solutions.

The event was co-organized by RACVIAC and the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) and financially supported by OPCW. Two days were devoted to theoretical presentations and discussions.

The Workshop was attended by 23 participants, lecturers and RACVIAC staff. The participants came from: the Republic of Albania (3), Bosnia and Herzegovina (2), the Republic of Croatia (1), Montenegro (1), Romania (1), the Republic of Serbia (2), the Republic of Turkey (1) and Kosovo* (3).

Execution

The Workshop was opened with a Welcome address by RACVIAC Director Ambassador Haydar Berk. Ambassador Berk emphasized that the CWC Workshop represents one of the most important annual activities of RACVIAC, and this year marked the fifteenth anniversary of its organisation. He stated that the main focus of this year’s event was on „Understanding Non-Proliferation in the CWC Context“ and within that comprehensive topic specifically on how to prevent the intentional misuse of chemicals and what to do in case that happens. Ambassador Berk pointed out that it is essential to have a complex picture about the issues, the ways of prevention and the players as well as the possible solutions in case of a CWC-related emergency situation. Special gratitude was extended to OPCW for its cooperation and sponsorship.

* 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. (In accordance with Arrangements regarding regional representation and cooperation.)
The Welcome address was followed by a very comprehensive introductory presentation by Mr Guy Valente, Project Officer (Assistance and Protection Branch, International Cooperation and Assistance Directorate, OPCW).

In his presentation Mr Valente provided an overview of CWC including the historical background on the chemical weapons (CW) as well as the Convention. He described the comprehensive nature of CWC and its key features, the Articles VI and IX, related to non-proliferation. In his second presentation Mr Valente elaborated on how capacity building can become a means of non-proliferation and in what ways it must be supported by the policy development process. National capacity is best developed by putting the right policies in place. He stated that OPCW would probably be interested in the establishment of a regional programme in the region. In his third presentation Mr Valente gave an overview of dual-use chemicals as well as a brief introduction to Article X and its link with the emergency management cycle with a focus on how to reduce the chemical threats.

This was followed by a very detailed presentation on dual-use chemicals and chemicals to be concerned about, with an emphasis on the subject of non-proliferation. In his presentation, Mr Valente pointed out the fact that non-proliferation with respect to chemicals is a huge challenge: chemicals surround us in our everyday lives and even the most common ones can be misused. National authorities and experts must be aware of the whole ‘cycle’ that includes the buyers, sellers, industries, transporters, and volume. This awareness in itself can support non-proliferation to a great extent, he stressed.

In the afternoon the introductory presentations were followed by more concrete “case studies” on how to prevent or address CW proliferation.

The afternoon part was opened by Mr Jan Wuyts, OPCW Chemical Weapon Munition Specialist (Contingency Cell of the Inspectorate), who took part in several OPCW missions and highlighted some of his mission experiences in Syria.

His presentation was followed by that of Ms Raluca Ginghina, the Head of the Chemical Analysis and Special Synthesis Laboratory at the Scientific Research Center for CBRN Defense and Ecology in the Romanian MoD. Having introduced the work of the Chemical Analysis and Special Synthesis Laboratory, Ms Ginghina provided insights on how it became an OPCW accredited laboratory. She described the process of accreditation, the OPCW Proficiency Test, the challenges in the process of acquiring the accreditation and also the conditions that can result in the loss thereof.

A second case study followed by Mr Jan Wuyts, titled “Old Chemical Weapon (OCW) Problem in Belgium”. In his presentation Mr Wuyts described the origin and the nature of the problem as well as the process of solving it. The audience learned that the goal of the Belgian OCW Programme in Poelkapelle is to destroy OCW in a safe way by respecting the environment and cleaning up environmental pollution at the same time.

The first working day was closed by Mr Guy Valente’s presentation on the “Effective Command and Control System” giving an overview of the national implementation of the Incident Command System (ICS) in the United States and its worldwide applicability to CBRN incidents.

The first part of the second working day was reserved for national presentations. In their national presentations the participants from the Republic of Albania, Bosnia and
Herzegovina, Republic of Croatia, Montenegro, Romania, Republic of Serbia and Republic of Turkey gave very valuable insights into their national systems with a focus on “How to ensure that dangerous chemicals don’t wind up in the wrong hands”.

In the afternoon LtC Valentina Ključarić (PhD), Head of CBRN Laboratory at the Centre for Defence and Strategic Studies “Janko Bobetko” shared the Croatian experiences on how to establish a state of the art CBRN laboratory. The presentation part of the working day was finalized by an expert lecture on the new techniques for sampling and analysis delivered by LtC Dragutin Tušek (PhD), NBC officer for nuclear protection at the Centre for Defence and Strategic Studies “Janko Bobetko”. The event was closed by an evaluation and a brief closing ceremony.

Conclusion

The Workshop was evaluated as highly interesting, professionally valuable and well organized. It was judged as very successful since it promoted the issue of the prohibition of chemical weapons and as a good example of fruitful cooperation between RACVIAC and the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons.