



CENTRE FOR SECURITY COOPERATION

Cooperative and Security Environment with Focus on Arms Control Pillar

Symposium on Mine Action

**22-26 April 2014, Zadar (Petrčane),
Croatia**

Organised in cooperation with the Federal Republic of Germany, the Government of the Republic of Croatia - Office for Demining and the Croatian Mine Action Centre (CROMAC).

Introduction

RACVIAC separately conducted a Workshop on the Implementation of the Convention on Cluster Munitions and the Ottawa Convention Seminar in the last few years. With this Symposium, RACVIAC is seizing the opportunity to merge – in the framework of a much bigger event Mine Action 2014 – the Workshop on the Implementation of the Convention on Cluster Munitions and the Ottawa Convention Seminar into one Symposium, supported financially by the Federal Republic of Germany.

This Symposium, as a whole, was conducted as a continuation of the International Symposium and the Equipment Exhibition “Mine Action 2014” series, and was the 11th Symposium in the series.

- The purpose of this Symposium was to provide a forum for discussions on security issues in the context of the Humanitarian Disarmament Treaties while focusing on technologies, both those that are available, as well as the new and upcoming ones.
- The Symposium provided an opportunity for all those involved or interested in mine action to broaden their contacts with the interested parties from both the private and public sectors on the national and international levels, by sharing their experiences and problems - both technological and managerial.



RACVIAC Director Ambassador Branimir Mandić



Symposium participants

The participants (9) came from the following countries: Albania (1), Bosnia and Herzegovina (1), Croatia (1), the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia* (1), Montenegro (2), Serbia (1) and Spain (2). They were both senior and junior military officials and civilians dealing with related issues.

The Symposium was conducted with the assistance of six (6) lecturers: Ms Dijana Pleština (HR), Col Rafael Jimenez Sánchez (ES), Prof Kenneth Rutherford (US), Mr Dorijan Maršič (SI), Mr Chris Clark (UK) and Mr Håvard Bach (NO).



H.E. Keiji Ide, the Ambassador of Japan to Croatia and Ms Vana Voinovich (MFA ME)

It was carried out as a combination of lectures and presentations, consisting of two blocks, entitled “Introduction into Humanitarian and Security Conventions – Ottawa Convention,” and “Introduction into Humanitarian and Security Conventions – Convention on Cluster Munitions” respectively, followed by questions and answers, completed by a short discussion. This Symposium was designed with the goal to share expertise, experience and information. The Symposium also provided a favourable environment and atmosphere for valuable and focused discussions.

Execution

The Symposium began on 24 April 2014 with the welcome address of the Deputy Director of RACVIAC, Brigadier General Zdravko Jakop, followed by the opening

remarks and lecture by Ms Dijana Pleština, Director of Office for Demining, Government of the Republic of Croatia. Ms Pleština gave an overview of the issue, emphasizing the role of cluster munitions. In her presentation she put special emphasis on the important influence of the so-called not-influential sector.



Opening remarks by Ms Dijana Pleština, Director of Office for Demining of Croatia

After the opening presentations, the floor was given to Col Rafael Jimenez Sanchez as the first presenter.

During the RACVIAC Symposium on Mine Action (Thursday, 24 April 2014) the following topics were presented:

The title of the first presentation was “CID International Demining Centre, Spain”, and it was delivered by Col Rafael Jimenez Sanchez (CID Intl. Demining and EOD Centre, Spain).

Col Sanchez gave a brief overview of the activities of the Centre itself as well as an introduction to the threats that need to be fought against. He gave an insight into the possible approaches to the problem (asymmetric, legal and military). He highlighted that even now, 70 years after the Spanish Civil War, UXOs can still be found. He said that in its approach the Centre’s task is threefold: prevention-reaction-recovery. He also criticised the relevant NATO protocol, saying it was dangerous.



Col Rafael Jimenez Sanchez, Director, CID Intl. Demining and EOD Centre, Spain

The next presenter, Professor Kenneth Rutherford, PhD (Director, Center for Intl. Stabilization and recovery, James Madison University) – who himself is a victim of a mine, having lost both of his legs – informed the participants about the history and milestones of the movement to ban landmines and illustrated his presentation with sometimes shocking photos. Prof Rutherford emphasized the role of the most important actors in this movement, i.e. Handicap International (France), the Human Rights Watch (USA), etc. and made a point of stressing that the issue is not a military one, but rather a humanitarian one. Interestingly enough, the United States of America has not banned the use and production of mines, he reminded, whereas, at the same time, it is the biggest mine action donor of today.



Prof. Kenneth Rutherford, PhD, Director, Center for Intl. Stabilization and recovery, James Madison University

At the end of the first bloc the floor was given to Mr Dorijan Maršič (Director, ITF Enhancing Human Security).



Mr Dorijan Maršič, Director, ITF Enhancing Human Security

The first lecturer of the second bloc was Mr Chris Clark (Mine Tech International, UK). First, the audience got a historical overview of the application of cluster munitions from the onset, going on to the German bombs of WW2, the first use on a great scale in Vietnam all the way through their deployment in the Falkland War by the British (unfortunately, there are no documents on that). In the 1991 operation Desert Storm in Iraq the coalition forces fired some 11 million sub-munition pieces, but in 1999 in Kosovo and South Serbia the US/UK forces used cluster munitions, which they used again in 2001-2003 in Afghanistan (Blue 97), Mr Clark added. Israel also fired millions of cluster munitions with its artillery on South Lebanon. According to the presenter, there is a contradiction between what the scientists think and the reality regarding the working methods in case of these munitions, for example concerning their self-destructive mechanisms. It is possible to fire out 12x644 sub-munitions by one single shot, and this figure can illustrate the destructive impact of cluster munitions.



Mr Chris Clark, Mine Tech International

The next presenter, Mr Håvard Bach, (Norwegian People's Aid) gave a historical insight into the legal aspects and the milestones of the Oslo Treaty (Convention on Cluster Munitions, CCM). To date, there are 84 States Parties to the Convention. On the other hand, there are reports of confirmed use of cluster munitions in 2011 from Lybia and Thailand, and we can talk about their extensive use from 2012 onwards in Syria.



Mr Håvard Bach, Norwegian People's Aid

Conclusion

According to the feedback received after the Symposium, the participants were highly satisfied with its execution. The Symposium was successful, very interesting and very well organized, they stated, adding that in the future they would like to hear more about both topics. They appreciated the idea of merging two activities into one, in the framework of a bigger event (Mine Action 2014), having an occasion to listen to all lectures, to take part in the field demonstration and take a closer look at the demining machines and other equipment.

Thanks to the cooperation between RACVIAC and the co-organisers, high-level lecturers took part in this Symposium. 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 Symposium 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 Demining of the Government of the Republic of Croatia and CROMAC. RACVIAC, in cooperation with its partners in this successful event, will continue to promote the issue of the prohibition of mines and cluster munitions with all of the means it has at its disposal.

*Compiled by: Mr Pál Bódogh-Szabó
Activity Coordinator
RACVIAC – Centre for Security Cooperation*

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