



CENTRE FOR SECURITY COOPERATION

“OSCE Code of Conduct on Politico-Military Aspects of Security: 20 Years Anniversary / Peer Review Conference”

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Group photo

Abstract

Given the importance of the OSCE Code of Conduct in the last 20 years, its values, standards and relevance for the Security sector reform and governance, RACVIAC - Centre for Security Cooperation in SEE organised, from 30th September to 2nd October 2014, in close cooperation with the OSCE Conflict Prevention Centre, a

three-day conference on the “OSCE Code of Conduct on Politico-Military Aspects of Security: 20 Years Anniversary / Peer Review Conference.”

The Conference was twofold, comprising a high level opening and commemorative session at the cabinet of the President of the state level, including statements by

individual high level representatives of the ministers, and a second, working part of the conference, where experts and representatives of SEE countries, through their presentations, worked in a very productive atmosphere in the format of a Peer review. This project is traditionally supported financially by the Federal Republic of Austria.

On the first day, after a high-level opening, which included speeches by Mr Zlatko Gareljić, Defence Adviser in the Office of the President of the Republic of Croatia, Major General Michele Torres, Personal Representative for Article IV, OSCE, Dr Istvan Gyarmati, Director of International Centre for Democratic Transition (ICDT) and former Executive Secretary of the Budapest OSCE Summit (1994), Mr Georg Diwald, Minister-Counsellor in the Embassy of the Federal Republic of Austria to Croatia and Mr Zoran Šajinović, Assistant Minister for International Cooperation in the Sector for International Cooperation in the Ministry of Defence of Bosnia and Herzegovina, a welcome reception took place. It was opened by Ms Sanja Bujas-Juraga, Director for NATO and International Security at the Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs of the Republic of Croatia and Ambassador Branimir Mandić, RACVIAC Director, who, in their speeches, underlined the political significance of the Code and the fact that it has lost visibility and resonance with the wider public in spite of being a landmark document.

Overall, the conference was a truly unique event. This was the first time that the exchange of ideas, experience and lessons learned in the field of Security Sector Reform was conducted via a Peer review since the Code has been implemented in practice. In view of the Questionnaire on the Code of Conduct in particular, which was adopted in 1998, in order to mark this conference per se a report was published

on the way forward towards better implementation of the OSCE Code of Conduct on Politico-Military Aspects of Security, which was prepared by Ms Nika Jabbarova, MSc. It sought to engage the replies to the Questionnaire on two levels- first, by highlighting some common practices from the 2014 submissions in comparison to previous years and, second, by making recommendations on how to improve reporting as a way forward towards better implementation of the OSCE Code of Conduct. As a whole, the report showed that there are lessons to be learned and that, while the response rate of the countries remains at a high level, there is definite room for improvement. One of the main conclusions of this report, moreover, was that the way forward towards better implementation of the OSCE Code of Conduct lies in the need to further update the Questionnaire.



The Conference was co-organized by RACVIAC - Centre for Security Cooperation in close cooperation with the OSCE Conflict Prevention Centre with the Federal Republic of Austria providing financial support for the project

Activity Background

Adopted in 1994 as a landmark document, the OSCE Code of Conduct on Politico-Military Aspects of Security stipulates that every year, by 15 April, the participating States exchange their replies to the Questionnaire among each other. In 2012 RACVIAC conducted a Seminar on the

occasion of the Code of Conduct which was very important for the promotion of the Code. During this seminar it was noticed that certain challenges are observed when it comes to lack of specific information in the information exchange and that it might be beneficial for the countries of the region to engage in a Peer review dialogue on the individual submissions included in the annual information exchange.

This year's Conference presented precisely that, an attempt to implement the idea of a Peer review, which was successfully accomplished in the working part of the Conference that was executed from 1st to 2nd October in RACVIAC – Centre for Security Cooperation.

Its first panel was dedicated to the implementation of the Code as a milestone document within the South East European region, while the second part provided an introduction to the Code of Conduct Information Exchange. The rest of the Conference was devoted to the in-depth Peer review among South East European states. During the Peer review an opportunity arose to ask questions and request clarifications on the different aspects of the 2014 submissions and how individual countries should improve their reporting practices, based on expert evaluation of Ms Nika Jabbarova, MSc, author of the "Report on The Way Forward Towards Better Implementation of the OSCE Code of Conduct on Politico-Military Aspects of Security".

This year's Conference was jointly organized in partnership between RACVIAC – Centre for Security Cooperation and the OSCE Conflict Prevention Centre in Vienna with, as has already been mentioned, the Republic of Austria providing financial support for the project.



Panel I included presentations on the OSCE Code of Conduct on Politico-Military aspects of security and how it is being implemented in the SEE Region

It succeeded in bringing together 50 participants on the level of the cabinet of the President of the state, ministerial and ambassadorial level, including nominees from RACVIAC member countries AL, BA, HR, MK, ME, RS and SI, senior military advisers (OSCE, the Swiss Confederation), experts (ICDT, DCAF) as well as RACVIAC management and staffers.



After the introduction to the Code of Conduct Information Exchange Ms Nika Jabbarova, MSc gave expert comments on how to improve reporting during the Peer review sessions among SEE states

Activity Description and Content

The Conference began with an introductory session to the Code of Conduct. This included an overview of the basic structure, contents and the historical

perspective and milestones in the development of the Code of Conduct, which was presented by LtCol Thomas Schmidt (OSCE Chairmanship 2014, Swiss Confederation) and LtCol Detlef Hempel (FSC Coordinator on the Code of Conduct) respectively, and continued with Mr Fabian Grass' (OSCE Conflict Prevention Centre) elaboration of the OSCE activities in support of the Code of Conduct, such as capacity building and peer review. Upon giving an outline of the concept of SSG/R, Mr Christian Waegli from the OSCE Conflict Prevention Centre in his presentation focused on OSCE's normative role in SSR/G. This was complemented by Ms Theodora Fuor's (DCAF Geneva) in-depth outline of the democratic oversight of Security Sectors in South-Eastern Europe which addressed the topical questions of Code of Conduct's generality and whether the knowledge and use of the Code can be uplifted from the technical to the political level. Before the introduction to the Code of Conduct information exchange, i.e. an introduction to the Peer review among the South East European states, ret. Brig Hamza Višća from the Centre for Security Studies in Bosnia and Herzegovina presented the national experience of Bosnia and Herzegovina. The Conference continued with Ms Nika Jabbarova's explanation of the methodology of the Peer review process which was conducted in two parts. The Peer review spanned Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Republic of Croatia, The Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia¹, Montenegro, Republic of Serbia and Republic of Slovenia and was, in the end, unanimously judged as a very successful experiment.

In her conclusion, Ms Jabbarova stated that the 2014 submissions, in view of the level of consistency, varied from one country to another and that there are clear lessons to

be learned from this exercise. However, when rated overall and certain technical issues within the questionnaire aside, it might be concluded that the quality of answers has increased over the years, stated Ms Jabbarova, and that there is ample reason to have a qualitative analysis of the submissions and continue with this useful practice in the future too, as there is much potential in the Code of Conduct that has yet to be uncovered.



Presenters from SEE each presented their 2014 submissions

Given the level of transparency demonstrated during the Peer review and the fact that this exercise was a completely new instrument that, as stated by Mr Fabian Grass, proved to be „good menu“, a proposal was made to conduct the exercise on a regular basis, e.g. annually or biannually. This idea was also endorsed by Ambassador Branimir Mandić, Director of RACVIAC in his closing remarks during the closing ceremony, which was followed by a lunch and officially marked a successful end of the Conference.

Concluding remarks and future actions

The main purpose of the opening part of the Conference was to stress and outline the importance of the OSCE Code of Conduct on Politico-Military Aspects of

¹ Turkey recognizes the Republic of Macedonia with its constitutional name

Security in the last twenty years, its values and standards, their relevance for security and peace today and the future. It is often said that OSCE CoC is a “hidden jewel” in the OSCE toolbox. Since its adoption the Code of Conduct has significantly improved its standing in security relations, and, therefore, demands a stronger representation and implementation efforts on the part of the OSCE participating States. In the Peer review part of the Conference, followed by SEE countries’ presentations concerning their implementation of the OSCE CoC, the Questionnaire was again recognised as an important mechanism for successful defence reform, SSG/R and protection of human rights of the armed forces in the context of the international humanitarian law. The fruitful discussions and exchange of views among participants showed the progress made in the implementation of the OSCE CoC in SEE countries as well as their willingness to actively engage in the process and do so transparently. There are lessons still to be learned, and while the response rates remain at a high level, there is definite room for improvement. Therefore, the way forward towards better implementation of the OSCE Code of Conduct lies in the need to further update

the Questionnaire. Through the Code, States get together to provide and maintain the democratic oversight of their armed, internal, paramilitary, intelligence and police forces - a custom that is widely advocated within the field of international relations. It is more than obvious that the OSCE Code of Conduct continues to serve as one of the most important normative frameworks for successful Security Sector Governance and Reform. In its new 2015-2020 Strategy RACVIAC will pave the way forward towards better implementation of the OSCE Code of Conduct and its importance for SSG/R as one of its main goals for the SEE region. Thus, RACVIAC will continue to serve as a platform for Security cooperation in SEE in the future too.

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