



Centre for Security Cooperation



DCAF
a centre for security,
development and
the rule of law



Joint Committee on Defence and Security
of Parliamentary Assembly of Bosnia and
Herzegovina

Defence and Security Committees: Regional Parliamentary Conference

12-14 December 2012

Rakitje, Zagreb, Croatia

Abstract: Effective parliamentary oversight has become crucial in ensuring that new responses to security threats are devised and implemented with full transparency and accountability. In its absence, there is a danger of security services misinterpreting their mission and acting like a state within a state, either placing heavy strains on scarce resources, or exerting excessive political and economic influence.

There is no doubt that knowledge, both theoretical and practical, is one of the preconditions for successful work of parliamentary representatives, members of the committees for parliamentary oversight over the security sector.



Conference group photo

Activity Background

The idea for this Conference was launched during the Seminar on “Democratic Control of Armed Forces as Basic Principle for SSR: Regional Perspective” held in Sarajevo, 11 – 13 June 2012 as a continuation of a fruitful cooperation between RACVIAC – Centre for Security Cooperation and Joint Committee on Defence and Security of Parliamentary Assembly of Bosnia and Herzegovina.



Opening session: Ms Teodora Fuior, Ms Dušanka Majkić, H.E. Mr Branimir Mandić, H.E. Ms Nancy Rossignol, H.E. Mr Bo Eric Webber and General Zdravko Jakop

Activity Facilitators

The Conference was planned, organized and executed as a joint event between RACVIAC – Centre for Security Cooperation and the Joint Committee on Defence and Security of the Parliamentary Assembly of Bosnia and Herzegovina. The Croatian Parliament has taken active part in the Agenda by hosting the participants in their facilities on the second day of the conference. The Conference was financially supported by DCAF Geneva. NATO HQ Sarajevo and OSCE Mission to Bosnia and Herzegovina also contributed to the organisation of this Conference.

Activity Venue, Duration and Participation

The main purpose of the Conference was to give a broad introduction on the

legislative part of parliamentary oversight in the region, to set out main principles and mechanisms of parliamentary operation and to give an overview of good practices in the regional parliamentary work.

The Conference was held from 12 to 14 December 2012 in RACVIAC facilities and the Croatian Parliament building. It was comprised of four panels where national representatives had an opportunity to give an overview of the current situation according to the panel topics.

The Conference gathered 34 participants (Albania 3, Belgium 1, Bosnia and Herzegovina 6, Croatia 6, Denmark 1, the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia* 4, Montenegro 3, Turkey 5, DCAF Geneva 1, NATO 2, OSCE Mission to B&H 1, Security Governance Group, Canada 1). Representatives from Belgium and Denmark were Ambassadors to Croatia, H.E. Ms Nancy Rossignol and H.E. Mr Bo Eric Weber.

Activity Description and Content

The event started with the opening session and the first to welcome the audience were Ambassador Branimir Mandić, Director of RACVIAC, Ms Dušanka Majkić, Chair of the Joint Committee on Defence and Security, Parliamentary Assembly of Bosnia & Herzegovina and Ms Teodora Fuior from DCAF Geneva.

They all pointed out that effective parliamentary oversight had become crucial in ensuring that new responses to security threats were devised and implemented with full transparency and accountability. Addressing the participants, Ms Majkić stressed the importance of regional cooperation in the field of security and highlighted that this conference was a significant contribution to promoting regional parliamentary cooperation as well as an opportunity to exchange experiences.

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

Keynote Speeches

Following introductory speeches, two respectable guest speakers addressed the participants. H.E. Ms Nancy Rossignol started her presentation with the explanation of BENELUX Treaty. She started from the very beginning, when the idea about the Treaty first came up and explained the need for that kind of agreement among BENELUX countries at that period of time. “BENELUX aims to be a region without borders, improving well-being and ensuring mobility, security and sustainable development for everyone”, Ambassador Rossignol stressed and continued by saying that “BENELUX is the ideal laboratory for the promotion of European integration”. H.E. Ms Nancy Rossignol also gave an interesting presentation on the Model of Benelux Police Cross-border cooperation.



H.E. Ms Nancy Rossignol

H.E. Mr Bo Eric Weber started his presentation with the historical background of cooperation between Nordic countries and said: “This cooperation is one of the oldest and most comprehensive regional partnerships in the world guided by the philosophy: united, yes - but not uniformed”. Ambassador Weber stressed that we can see practical result of this cooperation through: education, labour, TV cooperation and the Passport union. As one of the most important result of cooperation in the field of defence and security between Nordic countries, H.E. Mr Bo Eric Weber stressed NORDEFECO.



H.E. Mr Bo Eric Weber

Panel 1 – Current challenges in parliamentary oversight of security

The moderator of the first panel was Mr Branko Kromar, M.Sc., Programme Manager, SSR Pillar, RACVIAC. In this panel, representatives of national delegations gave short 10-minute presentations focused on the main challenges in conducting oversight, while they also provided possible solutions for overcoming these challenges.

Representatives of each parliament were asked to respond to the following questions: What are top three challenges in conducting oversight over security sector? What solutions do you envisage for overcoming these challenges?

The presentations in Panel 1 were given by Mr Gazmir Bizgha, member of the Albanian Parliament, Ms Dušanka Majkić, Chair of the Joint Committee on Defence and Security in the Parliament of Bosnia and Herzegovina, Ms Sandara Petrović, Croatian Parliament, Mr Misini Hajrula, Member of Defence and Security Committee, Assembly of the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia*, Mr Slaviša Šćekić, Expert Advisor, Parliament of Montenegro and Mr Alpaslan Kavakuoglu, Chairman of the Committee

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

of Defence and Security, Parliament of Turkey.

Panel 2 – Tools of parliamentary oversight: legal framework, hearings and investigation

The moderator of the second panel was Ms Teodora Fuior, Project Coordinator DCAF Geneva.

Focus in this panel was given to the legal aspect of parliamentary oversight, committee hearings and investigations as well as to summoning state officials and citizens, including sanctions applied for failure to comply with committee requests.



Ms Teodora Fuior

Representatives of each parliament were asked to present the legal framework of parliamentary oversight and committee practices related to the aforementioned elements.

Panel 3 – The power of the purse: parliamentary oversight of defence and security budgets

The moderator of the third panel was Mr Slaviša Šćekić, Expert Advisor, Parliament of Montenegro.

In their presentations, parliamentary representatives pointed out some specific problems and conditions they are facing in their defence and security committees, starting from the still unresolved legislative preconditions for successful and effective work to the problems they face in the field of parliamentary oversight over the security sector. They also stressed the

lack of necessary support from the executive branch, Ministries of Defence, Ministries of Interior and other institutions and agencies within the security sector on the national level. As the most serious problems, they mentioned difficulties in the area of public procurement and corruption. Besides the problems in their daily work, parliamentary representatives highlighted some successful practices such as increased influence on drafting, accepting and executing defence budgets and the benefits of open-door policy related to the public, which increases transparency of security sector.

The first working day was closed with a plenary discussion. Moderators of the plenary discussion were Ms Theodora Fuior, Mr Branko Kromar, M.Sc., and Mr Željko Grubešić.

Several interesting first impressions and outputs presented to the participants are also worth mentioning, such as support expressed to the organisers of the conference aimed at encouraging them to continue with these events. This shows that the participants were satisfied with transparent, honest and open exchange of views on the practices of the parliamentary bodies responsible for executing parliamentary oversight over the security sector that they had during the first day of the Conference.

On the second day, the Conference started in the Croatian Parliament. There, the participants were welcomed by Mr Josip Leko, President of the Croatian Parliament, Ambassador Branimir Mandić, Director of RACVIAC, Mr Miroslav Tuđman, Ph.D., Chair of the Committee for Internal Policy and National Security, Mr Tomislav Ivić, Chair of Defence Committee and by Mr Boris Blažeković, Chair of the Croatian Parliamentary Delegation to the Parliamentary Assembly of NATO who also moderated this session.



Delegation of Croatian Parliament: Mr Boris Blažeković, Mr Tomislav Ivić, Mr Josip Leko and Mr Miroslav Tuđman

In his welcome address, Ambassador Branimir Mandić, director of RACVIAC thanked the distinguished representatives of the Croatian Parliament for their warm welcome addresses and hospitality offered by hosting part of RAVIAC's conference in the facilities of the Croatian Parliament.

Panel 4 – Parliamentary control; international perspective

The moderator of this panel was Mr Branko Kromar, M.Sc. At the beginning, he thanked Mr Boris Blažeković for his role as a moderator of distinguished welcome speeches of the Members of the Croatian Parliament. In continuation, he introduced Ms Jasna Dragičević, OSCE Mission to Bosnia and Herzegovina. Her short presentation outlined the substance of one of the OSCE most relevant and important documents to strengthen security cooperation, the OSCE Code of Conduct on Politico-Military Aspects of Security, which was discussed in the closing part of the Conference, was recognised as an important document for promoting parliamentary oversight over the security sector, too.

Her presentation was followed by a presentation from Mr David Law, DCAF Senior Associate, Security Governance Group who gave an insight into Parliamentary Oversight of Security Sector as a precondition for NATO and EU membership.

At this point a short, a guided tour through the Croatian Parliament was undertaken, offering an excellent and impressive opportunity to be informed about the history of the Croatian Parliament and the Conference participants were greeted by a short applause given by the Members of the Croatian Parliament at their last session in the year 2012.

The second part of the programme of panel four continued in RACVIAC conference room in Rakitje, with the presentation on Cooperation Between NATO HQ Sarajevo and Joint Committee on Defence and Security of the Parliamentary Assembly of Bosnia and Herzegovina, given by Mr Rohan Maxwell, NATO HQ, Sarajevo.

Panel 5 – Democratic control and national security: conditions for effective oversight

Panel five was moderated by Mr Željko Grubešić, Joint Committee on Defence and Security, Parliamentary Assembly of Bosnia and Herzegovina. What followed was an interesting and very open discussion on the following issues: new security challenges and future developments of parliamentary oversight, challenges in Security Sector oversight (Police Agencies), challenges in Defence Sector and in trying to resolve the issue of protecting human rights and freedoms in Armed Forces.



Discussion

Closing remarks

The Regional Parliamentary Conference of Defence and Security Committees was the fourth effort of RACVIAC and the Joint Committee on Defence and Security, Parliamentary Assembly of Bosnia and Herzegovina focusing on Parliamentary Oversight over the security sector. At the same time it was the first meeting at such a high level of parliamentary representation from the SEE countries. This activity proved to be an excellent example of the regional parliamentary cooperation.

The main goals of the conference were achieved with full success, as several participants pointed out.

It was also repeatedly mentioned that this kind of event should continue in the future and even become a regular one.

Thus, the idea expressed by the Montenegrin delegation about having regular meetings of members of regional Defence and Security Committees, established within RACVIAC security format in June 2012, was realised and executed to the benefit of all participants and the regional security.

RACVIAC is more than ready to play an active role as the SEE regional platform for security cooperation in the area of parliamentary oversight of the security sector in the future.

In this segment, RACVIAC and its international partner organisations, encouraged by the support and positive statements of participating delegations, praise the Centre as a genuinely successful platform for security cooperation in South East Europe, both currently and in the future. Supporting and implementing this statement Montenegrin delegation offered possibility of coorganising next event of such a kind in the second half of 2013 in RACVIAC.

Compiled by:
SSR Pillar, RACVIAC