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## *The First Working groups Meeting on Defence Conversion*

**RACVIAC, Zagreb**

**06-07 December 2005**

### **General**

The First Working groups Meeting on Defence Conversion has been held in RACVIAC on 06 and 07 of December 2005, being financially secured by the Republic of Austria.

The event was designed for all relevant institutions of regional countries dealing with Defence Conversion issues, as well as international organizations and NGOs interested in the Defence Conversion process.

The participation has been as follows:

Albania 3, BiH 8, Bulgaria 5, Croatia 13, Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia<sup>1</sup> 5, Moldova 3, Romania 3, Serbia and Montenegro 10, Hungary 2, Austria 2, Czech Republic 2, USA 1, UK 2, Norway 3 as well as organizations and NGOs like OSCE BiH 3, OSCE Moldova 1, Stability Pact 3, NATO 2, DCAF 1, BICC 1, Council of Europe Development Bank 1, SEECP 1, Balkan Analysis Group 1.

In total, 76 participants attended this meeting.

### **Introduction and methodology**

The aim of the meeting was to discuss the questionnaire and matrix, to adopt the WG's chairmanship and to make the final proposal for Defence Conversion WG's activities in 2006.

A particular attention has been paid to the progresses and achievements which have been made by the regional countries on the Defence Conversion process and what the regional countries intend to do regarding Defence Conversion issues.

The meeting was conducted in two phases: plenary session and WG's session.

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<sup>1</sup> "Turkey recognizes the Republic of Macedonia with its constitutional name"

During the plenary session, the aims and expectations of the meeting were stressed out, such as the importance of Defence Conversion issues, the role of RACVIAC in the regional Defence Conversion approach and the adoption of chairmen for the working groups.

The chairmanships in 2006 were taken by Croatia, Maj. Zvonko Popovic (WG1), Bulgaria, Col Yonko Stefanov Totevski (WG2) and Bosnia and Herzegovina, Mr. Vladislav Jokic (WG 3).

The following high-level representatives from international organizations involved in Defence Conversion said some introductory words during the plenary session:

- Amb. Panayiotis Mpaizos (SEESP)
- Mr. Pieter Verbeek (Stability Pact)
- Mr. Efthymios Pantzopoulos (NATO)
- Mr. Renato Cobal (MFA Croatia),

Keynote speakers addressed the audience on following topics:

- Dr. Reinhard H. Weise (BICC), Conversion-a complex and lengthy challenge-models and principles applied in Germany,
- Mr. Mark Remillard ( DCAF), "Lessons learned on Defence Conversion",
- Mr. Efre Radev, " Military Base Conversion"

All three WGs were chaired by the above-mentioned chairman except WG3, which was chaired by Gen. Henny van der Graaf due to the fact that Mr Jokic was on an official trip abroad.

During the Working groups' sessions, all countries presented their current situation and needs, discussed the questionnaire and matrix and made proposals for WGs activities in 2006.

## **Conclusions**

The general assessment regarding the achievements of the meeting were positive and the experts were very professional in presenting the perspectives of the subject based on real experience from projects done so far. All participants appreciated the discussions and took an active role in them.

The role of Mr. Efre Radev as an expert was particularly welcomed in WG2 with his approach to the issues and helping the participants to catch the main points of the subject. Mr. Josef Fucik and his expertise were of great help in the work of WG3 in preparing a draft questionnaire, which was discussed and agreed to be sent to the capitals of the respected countries regarding military industry conversion.

The participation of international organizations and their willingness to support the whole initiative showed the importance of Defence Conversion issues in restructuring and downsizing the AF. In particular, DCAF has showed the willingness to actively support activities of WG1 and NATO to support activities of WG 2.

RACVIAC strongly welcomed the example of the Republic of Austria, which financed the WG's meeting and the readiness of some countries to host/finance some WG's activities, in particular Bulgaria and possibly the Czech Republic.

The meeting was additionally important by recognizing the subject as a regional problem and strengthening regional ownership. The director of RACVIAC together with three WG chairmen will visit capitals in order to make those efforts more concrete for future implementation.

At the plenary session, the chairmen of the WG said the closing words and reported what has been done during the WG session (Annexes 1,2,3). They also proposed changes to the final program of activities for the year 2006 (Annex 4)

**Brig. Gen. Stergios Papatīs**  
**Director of RACVIAC**

Annexes:

Annex 1; Report WG 1,  
Annex 2; Report WG 2,  
Annex 3; Report WG 3,  
Annex 4; Programme 2006 in the field of Defence Conversion