

**International Conference of Ombuds Institutions for the Armed Forces**

**Monday 11 May, 10h00-10h15,**

**Welcome Remarks by**

**Ambassador Theodor H. Winkler,**

**Director, Geneva Centre for the Democratic Control of Armed Forces**

Final

\$only the spoken word is valid

**Protocol**

- Your excellencies, ladies and gentlemen, I would like to join Reinhold Robbe – the Parliamentary Commissioner for the Armed Forces– in wishing you a very warm welcome to this conference.
- I am delighted that you have come in such numbers to the Bundestag to attend the first international conference of ombudsinstitutions for the armed forces. 160 participants have registered for the conference, which represents a great success.

- In particular, I would like to extend my greetings to the representatives of the ombudsinstitutions for the military of the 18 states from Latin America, North America and Europe.
- DCAF is very honoured to have the opportunity to co-host this conference. It has been a great pleasure to work together with my good friend Reinhold Robbe and his colleagues over the past year to organize this event – I would like to express my special thanks to all of you for your hard work in ensuring that this has become a reality.
- Above all, I would like to use the opportunity to congratulate Mr. Reinhold Robbe on the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the office of the German Parliamentary Commissioner for the Armed Forces. As we all can see, he is still going very strong.

## **Introducing DCAF**

- Before going into the objectives and specifics of this conference, let me first outline what DCAF is and why we are engaged in this very important event.
- DCAF is not a sign for the upcoming coffee break neither should you be afraid that we will de-cafeinate the military of your country, but the

acronym stands for the Geneva Centre for the Democratic Control of Armed Forces. DCAF is an international foundation, made up of 51 member states covering most of the Euro-Atlantic area as well as member states from Africa, Middle East and Southeast Asia. The member states are represented in the Foundation Council of DCAF, our highest decision-making body to whom I report and who approves our strategy, activities and yearly budget.

- We have more than 100 members of staff from some 40 countries; Besides from our headquarters in Geneva, we have offices in Brussels, Copenhagen, Ljubljana, Ramallah and Beirut.
- Our mandate is to provide in-country advisory support and practical assistance [programmes](#), to develop and promote democratic norms at the international and national levels, to advocate good practices and to conduct policy-related research in order to ensure effective democratic governance of the security sector. We do this in the best of all Swiss traditions (in addition to producing chocolate, watches and cheese), that is in an impartial and neutral way of operating.
- This is not our first activity in the field of ombuds-institutions for the military. Let me mention a few of our other projects in this area:
  - Together with the United Nations Development Programme, DCAF has formulated recommendations and organised training

events on strengthening ombudsman institutions dealing with the security sector in post-Soviet states;

- In cooperation with the Office of Democratic Institutions and Human Rights of the OSCE, DCAF has set up a programme on human rights of armed forces personnel, leading to handbook (in EN, FR and RU) and various in-country capacity-building events.

### **Point of departure: Security sector governance**

- The concept of Security Sector Governance provides us with the context for our role in supporting ombudsinstitutions for the military. According to the United Nations, security sector governance is the management and oversight of the security sector according to principles of accountability, transparency and civilian control. This is an important tool for engaging with transition states and post-conflict countries, where a dysfunctional security sector impedes the effective delivery of security to the state and its people, and therefore it hinders the further development of state-building.
- Indeed, any state can benefit from applying principles of democratic security sector governance, which entails a comprehensive approach to

security and the security sector, including not only the military but also the police, intelligence services, border guards and even non-state security actors.

### **Importance of ombudsinstitutions for security sector governance**

- Ombudsinstitutions play an important role in providing for good governance of the security sector. Their exact added value depends on their specific mandate, powers and level of independence. I am very pleased to see that a wide variety of ombudsinstitutions are represented at this conference, ranging from parliamentary commissioners as in Germany and Austria, to inspector-generals in France and the United States, and more general civilian ombudsinstitutions, for example, from Sweden and Serbia.
- All of these institutions share a common purpose, that is to oversee, protect and promote the welfare and the rights of armed forces personnel. By addressing complaints about improper and abusive behaviour in the military, examining shortcomings in military procedures, and formulating recommendations for remedial action – ombudsinstitutions can make a valuable contribution to security sector governance

- We see the following possible important contributions of an ombuds-institution to the good governance of the armed forces:
  - They promote transparency and accountability within the armed forces;
  - They ensure respect for the rule of law in the armed forces;
  - They focus attention on problems in military practice requiring corrective action;
  - They enhance efficiency and effectiveness of the armed forces;
  - They strengthen public confidence and the reputation of the armed forces.

### **Objectives of this conference**

- The objective of this conference is to exchange experiences and identify principles of best practice regarding the mandates, powers and functioning of ombuds-institutions for the armed forces.
- We hope that this conference can play an important role in cross-national learning. The starting point for our discussions is that there is NO best model or correct way of organising an ombudsinstitution, but that we can

identify principles and best practices which can and must be tailored to the requirements of a specific contexts and national experiences.

- We are particularly pleased that a number states that do not yet have an ombudsinstitution for the armed forces, have accepted our invitation to attend the conference. These states can count on DCAF's support for establishing this important tool of good governance of the security sector.

## **Conclusion**

- We hope very much that this conference will contribute to international cooperation between ombudsinstitutions and that it will not remain a one-off event. Indeed, as indicated in the draft declaration of this conference, we hope that the event will lead to regular contacts at the international level and perhaps, in the future, to an international association of ombudsinstitutions for the armed forces.
- This is very important as the militaries that you are overseeing, are also becoming increasingly globalised and international. Many if not all states currently present at this conference, either contribute or have contributed to international peacekeeping operations; or have pooled resources with their neighbouring states while some other states have even established integrated headquarters and military units.

- We must acknowledge that national ombudsinstitutions have to come to terms with an increasingly globalised world. It is hoped that this conference will contribute to this unfolding international reality.
- With these words I will end by wishing you all a very interesting and hopefully constructive two days of discussions here in Berlin.