

Conference *Security Sector Reform and Donor Assistance in Serbia*

Report

The Conference *Security Sector Reform and Donor Assistance in Serbia* which took place on 2 February 2010 in the Hyatt Regency in Belgrade occupied a significant number of expert representatives of the state ministries, international donor organisations and foreign embassies in Serbia, as well as local civil society organisations.

The Conference was opened by Mr. **Ivan Vejvoda**, Executive Director in the Balkan Trust for Democracy, and Mr. **Thanos Dokos**, Director General of Hellenic Foundation for European and Foreign Policy (Eliamep). Both speakers agreed that security sector reform (SSR) in the country had been so far successful but that various problems remained, making the reform a difficult process. Ms. **Lucia Montanaro**, Senior Advisor on EU Affairs of International Alert and managing the Initiative for Peacebuilding, concluded that security of Serbia should not be analyzed without taking into consideration specific political and social context, as well as a need for strategic and programme based approach to SSR. She also stressed that the EU needs to utilise its leverage to ensure that Serbia allocates its IPA funds to relevant reforms rather than facilitate the Serbian budget flow.

Mr. **Amadeo Watkins**, Head of the Strategic Development Unit in Law Enforcement Department of OSCE Mission to Serbia, and an author of the Serbia Case Study *Security Sector Reform and Donor Assistance in Serbia 2000-2010*, said that the document was a critical assessment and a constructive framework for change in Serbia. He stressed that **SSR in Serbia was all about state-building and advance governance**, since twofold major change was currently occurring in Serbia – a decrease in donor support to SSR and an increase in expectations from Serbia. Since the country has recently completed the first and is about to start the second generation of SSR, **the SSR-related donor assistance is mainly related to change management process.**

Major weaknesses of Serbia in managing SSR are the dominance of operational thinking, absence of formal state instruments for donor assistance, insufficient state absorption capacity, lack of both horizontal and vertical cooperation, and the absence of local ownership over change as an ultimate state's responsibility. **Weaknesses of donor assistance in SSR** are also numerous – lack of strategic coherence in providing assistance and insufficient cost-effectiveness of donor funds.

In order to shed light on the current status of SSR, Mr. **Djordje Popovic**, Research Fellow and Education Coordinator in Centre for Civil Military Relations, presented briefly the findings of the Centre's *Yearbook on Security Sector Reform in Serbia 2000-2009*.

In further discussion, speakers from different sectors pointed out a few highly important issues:

Ms. **Gordana Lazarević**, Assistant Minister of Finance, explained that the Ministry had a complex role in managing foreign financial assistance in Serbia, since it had to coordinate with international donors and other state ministries, and the EU increasing priority is public administration reform of the country.

Mr. **Nigel Fenn**, Defence Attaché in the UK Embassy, said that the two most important things regarding further SSR were strategic approach to delivery and consistency, and communication of the goals to citizens.

As a representative of civil society in Serbia, Ms. **Sonja Liht**, Director of the Fund for Political Excellence, emphasized the importance of inter-sector collaboration in reform processes, while Mr. **Aaron Presnall**, Director of Studies in the Jefferson Institute, said that donors and recipients of assistance should intensively cooperate. In this regards, Defence Attaché in the Norwegian Embassy, Mr. **Terje Haaverstad**, noticed that defence reform in Serbia could continue successfully only with enhanced local participation. Also, Mr. **Vladimir Bilandzic**, Security Advisor in the OSCE Mission to Serbia, said that the donor community in Serbia should apply a holistic approach to SSR, which would then require more intensive coordination between donors and recipients.

Representatives of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Mr. **Zoran Vujic** and Mr. **Aleksandar Vidojevic**, both implied that the Ministry's cooperation with the EU and NATO though increasing at expert and operational level, could still be characterized as politically highly sensitive issue.

In the conclusion, Mr. **Amadeo Watkins** reiterated main recommendations for effective donor assistance in SSR in Serbia - the role of the civil society in the process, move from tactical to strategic approach, and the application of the so called all system approach (assuming strategizing and availability of strategic thinkers).