

Geneva Centre for the Democratic Control of Armed Forces (DCAF)

In spite of the progress made in the past decade, the transformation and management of democratic civil-military relations remain a major challenge to many States. This is particularly true for the countries in transition towards democracy, war-torn and post-conflict societies. Armed and paramilitary forces as well as police, border guards and other security-related structures remain important players in many countries. More often than not, they act like "a State within the State", putting heavy strains on scarce resources, impeding democratisation processes and increasing the likelihood of internal or international conflicts. It is therefore widely accepted that the democratic and civilian control of such force structures is a crucial instrument of preventing conflicts, promoting peace and democracy as well as ensuring sustainable socio-economic development.

The strengthening of democratic and civilian control of force structures has become an important policy issue on the agenda of the international community. As a practical contribution to this general and positive trend, the Swiss government established in October 2000, at the joint initiative of the Federal Department of Defence, Civil Protection and Sports and the Federal Department of Foreign Affairs, the Geneva Centre for the Democratic Control of Armed Forces (DCAF).

Mission

The Centre encourages and supports countries in their efforts to strengthen democratic and civilian control of force structures and promotes international cooperation in this field, with an initial focus on the Euro-Atlantic area.

To implement these objectives, the Centre:

- collects information, undertakes research and engages in networking activities in order to identify problems, establish lessons learned and propose best practices in the field of democratic control of armed forces and civil-military relations;

- provides its expertise and support in a tailor-made form to all interested groups, in particular governments, parliaments, military authorities, international organisations, non-governmental organisations, academic circles.

DCAF works in close cooperation with national authorities, international and non-governmental organisations as well as relevant academic institutions and individual experts. In its operational and analytical work, DCAF relies on the support of 45 governments represented in its Foundation Council, on its International Advisory Board comprising some 60 renowned experts, its own Think Tank and its working groups. Furthermore, DCAF has established partnerships or concluded cooperation agreements with various institutions, such as research institutes, international organisations and inter-parliamentary assemblies.

Work Programme

In order to be able to thoroughly address specific topics of democratic control of armed forces, DCAF has established or plans to establish twelve dedicated working groups covering the following issues: security sector reform; parliamentary oversight of armed forces; legal dimension of the democratic control of armed forces; transparency-building in defence budgeting and procurement; civilian experts in national security policy; democratic control of police and other non-military security forces; civil-military relations in conversion and force reductions; military and society; civil society building; civil-military relations in post-conflict situations; criteria for success or failure in the democratic control of armed forces; civil-military relations in the African context. Planning, management and coordination of the working groups is centralized in the Centre's Think Tank.

DCAF is providing expertise on bilateral and multilateral levels as well as for the general public. A number of bilateral projects in the areas of security sector reform and parliamentary control of armed forces have been initiated in support of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, the Republic of Serbia, Bosnia and Herzegovina as well as Ukraine. At the multilateral level, DCAF implements several projects in the framework of the Stability Pact for South Eastern Europe and the Organisation for Security and

Cooperation in Europe. To reach specialized and general audiences, the Centre regularly organizes conferences, workshops and other events, produces publications and disseminates relevant information by means of information technology, including its own website (<http://www.dcaf.ch>).

Organisation and Budget

DCAF is an international foundation under Swiss law. 45 governments are represented in the Foundation Council. The International Advisory Board is composed of the world's leading experts in DCAF's areas of interests, acting in their personal capacity and entrusted with advising the Director of DCAF on the Centre's overall strategy. DCAF staff comprises 50 specialists from 30 nations, who work in four departments: Think Tank, Cooperation Programmes, Information Resources, Administration & Logistics.

The Swiss Federal Department of Defence, Civil Protection and Sports finances most of the DCAF budget. Another important contributor is the Federal Department of Foreign Affairs. Certain member States support DCAF by seconding staff members or contributing to the Centre's specific activities.

Contact

For additional information please contact:

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