



CONSULTATION OF CIVIL SOCIETY AND THE ACADEMIC COMMUNITY ON THE EIGHTH CONFERENCE OF MINISTERS OF DEFENCE OF THE AMERICAS WITH A VIEW TO DEVELOPMENT OF ITS TOPICAL AGENDA

San José, November 15-16, 2007
FLACSO/RESDAL

Final Report

Background

The meetings of ministers of defence have translated into significant progress in regional relations in the pursuit of mutual trust for peace-building in the hemisphere. Seven meetings have been held, and an eighth has been scheduled for September 2008 in Canada.

At the 1st Summit of the Americas in December 1994, the presidents of the countries of the Americas reaffirmed their commitment to democracy. The summit, which was held in the city of Miami, generated a new architecture in hemispheric relations. Preparations began at that point for what was to become, in July 1995, the first meeting of all Ministers of Defence of the Americas in Williamsburg, Virginia, United States of America.

The Williamsburg principles laid the groundwork for discussion and future policies, affirming that mutual security lies in the preservation of democracy, and that the armed forces should be subordinate to democratically elected authorities.

The topical agendas for the subsequent meetings (Bariloche 1996, Cartagena 1998, Manaus 2000, Santiago 2002, Quito 2004 and Managua 2006) were expanded, covering topics such as the hemispheric security system, transparency and trust development measures (white papers, education, budgets), modernization of the armed forces, peace operations, natural disasters, mine disposal, cooperation to deal with terrorism and drug trafficking and migration, among others, from which certain consensuses arose that are reflected in the final declarations of each meeting.

Beginning with the Conference in Ecuador, civil society was permitted to participate with observer status, which was a very significant step in the opening up of defence topics. This also took place at the meeting in Managua.

The next hemispheric summit, to be held in the city of Banff, Canada, in September 2008, will face new challenges. The political climate today is not the same as it was in the year 1995. The current climate is characterized by a high level of tension between the different political, economic and social models of the national governments. New disputes have arisen, the level of trust between heads of State is low, and significant degrees of polarization are evident in different societies. This was explicitly evident at the last Ibero-American Summit held in November 2007 in Chile.

The Canadian government has already started organizing the meeting and, under this framework, the Executive Director of the upcoming Conference of Ministers of Defence asked the Secretariat General of the Latin American Faculty of Social Sciences (FLACSO) and the Latin



American Security and Defence Network (RESDAL) to call for a consultation meeting with civil society and the academic/expert community on matters of security and defence to discuss the topics suggested for the topical agenda for the eighth Conference. This call to meet was the result of renewed interest in hearing the expert opinions of civil society and academia at the hemispheric level. The objective was to express ideas, suggestions and proposals to the government of Canada on the topics that appear to be the most relevant and important for next year's conference.

Participants and work method

The meeting was a closed one. Directors and researchers from the main centres, entities and non-governmental organizations working in the area of defence in each country, as well as academic experts from the region, were called upon to participate. The meeting thus brought together select participants from the academic world and from non-governmental organizations in various parts of the hemisphere. In the end, the list of participants included representatives of the Washington Office for Latin America (WOLA), the Centre for Hemispheric Defense Studies (CHDS) of the National Defense University of the United States of America, the Autonomous University of Mexico (UNAM), the Institute of Teaching for Sustainable Development (IEPADES) of Guatemala, the Centre for Strategy and National Security Studies of Jamaica, the Institute of Higher Studies for Security and Defence of the Dominican Republic, the Pedagogical Institute of Caracas (Venezuela), the Latin American Faculty of Social Sciences of Ecuador, the Democracy and Security Observatory (ODyS) of Bolivia, the Security and Defence Studies Group (GEDES) of the Centre for Latin American Studies at UNESP in Brazil, the Centre for Legal and Social Studies (CELS) of Argentina, the Centre for Human Rights Study, Training and Analysis (CECADH), members of the RESDAL board of directors, the thematic coordinators from the Quito and Managua conferences, and officials from the Ministries of Defence of Chile and Peru and from the Secretariat of State for the Armed Forces of the Dominican Republic, all closely linked to civil society in both their histories and current functions.

Prior to the meeting days, the participants were asked to send a small opinion document containing their positions on the topical agenda of the Conference of Ministers (summary of those documents attached), which allowed each representative to arrive at the meeting immersed in the subject area and with clear ideas that would bolster the discussions.

The meeting took the form of a day and a half of sessions and had a flexible work method without formal panels that allowed all participants to express and exchange their opinions. The presentations entrusted to certain experts served only to elicit discussion of the various topics set forth on the agenda for the meeting.

As established in the regulations of the Conferences of Ministers of Defence, the topical agenda is proposed by the host country and agreed upon by means of consultations with the various governments. In this first stage, the directors organizing the eighth meeting have come up with the generation of discussion on the following as the main axis:

- Assistance in cases of natural disaster
- Assistance in events of national scope
- Peacekeeping



Schedule and discussions

The meeting began with words from its organizers, Francisco Rojas, Secretary General of FLACSO, and Marcela Donadio, Executive Secretary of RESDAL, who thanked the Canadian delegation for its initiative in generating this discussion with civil society and the academic world in the hemisphere in preparation for the Conference of Ministers. After a brief introduction of each participant, Mike Snell, Executive Director of the Eighth Conference, referred to the consultation process that would be opened to determine the topical agenda, at this first stage to civil society, explaining the reasons for the proposed axes that emphasize generating a climate of trust, and the need to obtain resources to educate Canada's high-level bureaucracy on the region. He also reaffirmed as a strategy of the Canadian government a commitment to Latin America and to playing a greater role in the discussion of important topics at the hemispheric level, especially through emphasis on three areas of work: 1) strengthening the foundational values of democracy and freedom, respect of human rights and the rule of law; 2) building and maintaining more sustainable economies with greater opportunities for citizens; and 3) paying careful attention to natural disasters. The main advisor to the upcoming Conference then referred to the positive nature of defence topics in the region in comparison to other areas, such as the economy, in order that we might hold fast to those positive aspects and prevent negative elements from arising prior to September 2008, the date scheduled for the hemispheric summit. The Canadian authorities stated that these objectives are part of Canada's new hemispheric strategy and of a marked Canadian interest in the security agenda in Latin America.

The afternoon session was devoted to having each of the participants express his or her general opinions on the agenda topics and the context of the Eighth Conference of Ministers of Defence. In turn, certain basic conclusions were made on the Conferences in general and the current political climate that serves as a backdrop to preparation of the eighth conference was briefly analyzed.

Firstly, it was emphasized that the Conferences of Ministers of Defence are a political event and not a meeting of experts, which means that their results must be expressed in that arena—as a political outcome. To that end, the backbone of the Conference is its topical agenda, from which the final declaration is then derived. These meetings have become stable forums, with continuity in time and with respect to topics. They have reached important agreements with minimal dissent. However, many of the consensuses have been reached because the Conferences are not legally binding and greater flexibility may arise. For some experts, it is necessary to put forward and discuss real issues, including those in which there are no agreements, thereby recognizing the differences. Different views are acknowledged on various disputes and on the role of the armed forces or on the topic of definitions. A lack of consensus could be useful to help clarify positions. The discussion helped clarify that what has the most impact at these ministerial meetings is the reflection of the specific contexts that the countries are living. This has been the case since the founding of the Latin American defence system. The particular difficulty of the current context was not sidestepped, and it was emphasized that there are distinct proposals that, while they do not explicitly appear on the table, weigh heavily on the atmosphere, which constitutes a challenge. It was stated that the topic of defence acts as a curb on progress in other contexts. Looking ahead to September 2008, while no negative elements are envisaged for the time being, they could in fact arise, and it is best that they be avoided. To that end, the Canadian authorities acknowledge that they want to contribute to developing a positive process with adequate discussion spaces at



the hemispheric level. In those spaces, trust can be built and progress can be made on specific topics of hemispheric interest.

Political moments must continue to be evaluated. To that end, it is also important to consider the electoral scene in which the United States is immersed, and the change of direction in its policy towards the region from the fight against terrorism to the first against organized crime as its central axis. In this framework, the United States military is increasingly expanding its functions (an example of this is the similarity of the Southern Command to a development agency). The defence budget generally is not limited to defence but rather covers broad topics of national security, including development issues. There is therefore a fairly urgent need to have basic concepts in place before attempting to redefine and superimpose tasks in matters of defence, security and development. The hemisphere is divided into subregions, and this diversity must be reflected, although the concept of multidimensionality, which takes on particular characteristics in each subregion and which has specific components in hemispheric issues, must be carefully addressed.

Reflection on the difficult moments being experienced by summit diplomacy was present in all the interventions—even in subregional relations, it is in a slump. The way of understanding and practising democracy is not the same in all States in the region. Some delegations could be expected to seek to affirm suppositions and hence hinder an agreed-upon final declaration.

Given this context, it was agreed that success would be achieved when the Conference manages to maintain the instrument as a space for hemispheric dialogue. Civil society also has a role in this respect—it must be responsible and understand that there are things that can be discussed and others that can't. There are topics with consensus on which work can continue. The proposed topical agenda, in principle, make not take the interests of all the Ministers into account. Other points could perhaps be added, but with the prudence that the current conditions merit.

Given the leading role of several of those present in the previous conferences, certain considerations have also been expressed for determination of the topical agenda. While the national interests of the host country and subregional interests are considered, it is necessary to find relevant topics on the hemispheric agenda—taking into account the context and monitoring of the defence topics (and those not yet addressed)—that coincide with the current reality. Unnecessary repetitions should be avoided and hot and highly controversial political topics should be identified to avoid their discussion, although it should be possible to address certain sensitive topics and express them in a non-antagonistic manner. It is therefore necessary to generate three characteristics: creativity, flexibility and political inclusion. It has been emphasized that the meeting of ministers should help generate input to establish a national defence policy as a national public policy, as a State policy.

Also evident in the discussions was the fact that the ministerial defence forum has been stable, with a sequence of topics carried through from one conference to the next, despite the specificities proper to each one. It has managed to place cumulative and progressive permanent topics on a historic agenda that generates trust and helps construct national, regional and hemispheric visions. In that context, it was stated during this consultation meeting that while the conferences are not binding, they do in fact analyze the trajectory of defence and security topics, evaluate consensuses and differences in each political climate and serve as an adequate situation thermometer for the governments. Lastly, they produce inputs aimed at increasing the quality of



national defence policies as public policies. They also contribute to the development of bilateral and regional cooperation programs and to political dialogue.

Also emphasized was the importance of identifying and carefully breaking down the topics, since the political usefulness of these conferences depends on the topical agenda; ultimately, choosing between becoming a purely rhetorical conference or one that incorporates elements linked to cooperation in the field and well-defined courses of action. The latter option helps build trust—rhetoric makes agreements difficult and deprives concepts of content.

Under the framework of the first topics proposed by the Canadian government, certain aspects have arisen that must be included as central. Broad consensus has been achieved to the effect that the axis of cooperation is peace missions. This subject should specifically include the issue of participation by women. This is a specific topic that would not entail major controversy but which is in turn relevant. To that same end, it was suggested that a forum for evaluation of these missions be created. Also proposed was the establishment of peace and stability observatories in the region that function as early alert mechanisms. Cooperation in the face of natural disasters must continue to be discussed, in particular in the framework of global warming and climate change that is expressing itself in today's world. The topic of drafting new white papers should also be incorporated as a means of building trust. These review defence policies and require greater participation by civil society and specialized academics. They must include studies on transparency in defence budgets and promote methodology developed by Argentina and Chile, with support from ECLAC, to make expenditures comparable. Another main point that should be incorporated is the institutionality of defence. Today we are seeing very weak Ministries of Defence, many of them led by the armed forces themselves—mostly soldiers in active service—with no civilian command. This is an abnormal situation in the framework of democratic political systems. It is necessary to continue the effort to construct a civilian-led institutionality. Under this framework, it is also important to push for better civilian training in defence matters and to strengthen interinstitutional coordination. This is an area in which there are still efforts to be made.

Other topics put forth generated significant discussion amongst the participants. There are those who insist that the current reality forces the inclusion of issues such as organized crime and the war against drugs in an effort to generate greater coordination and cooperation in this area. However, these are not defence topics. A meeting of Ministers of Defence should pursue the common minimum on topics of defence and not address all issues of national concern. The Canadian delegation affirmed that its defence department does not have functions in this area, and that these topics can therefore not be included in the working agenda. The situation is similar in the Southern Cone countries—there is juridical, legal and constitutional delimitation in police and defence matters.

Lastly, there are certain prominent characteristics of the host country that could benefit the organization of the Conference. Canada has made a name for itself as a country with the capacity to incorporate differences. This cultural element could be a great contribution to the meeting, helping to find common values even in the midst of the differences being expressed in the hemisphere. The Canadian experience as organizer of the Third Summit of the Americas could also be drawn upon. To this end, and in order to make progress and avoid unnecessary tension, it is important to clarify the formal methodology of the conference. The opening of spaces for private dialogue between the Ministers is essential. It must be remembered that this meeting is political in nature, although some leaders are from the military. The technical meetings must be



improved. It is suggested that a space could be opened for civil society by means of a transparent dialogue on the topics analyzed in the technical committees. In addition, it must be taken into account that not everything that is important and that is discussed in the hemisphere fits into the topic of security and defence. The hemispheric agenda is complex. The factors that have an impact on the main topics, which are linked to violence and the use of force, are multidimensional in nature. In that context, it is urgent to maintain the topics of mutual trust by means of a private dialogue between actors.

Lastly, these three topical axes proposed for the eighth conference, which have arisen from meetings between the Canadian government, local NGOs and certain interest groups, still do not make up a final agenda; they will seek to be flexible and give shape to the topics that have been mentioned in the discussion, thereby avoiding the repetitions of the past.

The second day of the meeting involved specific discussion on each of these topics. The central elements arising from each of these discussions are indicated here:

a) Advancing in trust building – 1: “Cooperation for major events”

The concepts of security and the trust-generating measures in the hemisphere were briefly placed in context. The limitations of the definitions adopted at the Hemispheric Security Conference in Mexico (2003) for the institutionalization and implementation of defence policies and the persistent different perceptions of security and national defence policies that have further weakened the hemispheric perspective in matters of security and defence were indicated.

To launch this part of the discussion, the need to articulate interstate and multilateral policies and find a way to connect them to the regional integration processes was also addressed. The variety of interests and approaches on the areas into which security dynamics are broken down must be recognized and identified. The last two conferences stated that hemispheric security is being deployed through a spread of subregional approaches. This confirms the need to move towards a flexible architecture that integrates a plurality of regional systems and subregional and bilateral defence and security scenarios. It was adduced that while the major hemispheric forums have been addressing the topic of security, there is also a notable absence of institutionality since military cooperation is limited to subregional at the expense of a marked weakening at the hemispheric level. In a continent plagued with asymmetry, heterogeneity and diverse perceptions, the generation of trust measures should be linked to the building of bilateral or multilateral cooperation systems in specific contexts that function in specific situations. These mutual trust measures must not be restricted to the military—rather, national defence policies with regional projection should be induced.

The topic of security should be added to political forums of global projection; the repositioning of regional cooperation is a problem of political measures and a means of breaking down the divisions between the military and other spheres should be sought, while preserving a space for defence as such.

Main points of discussion:

- How to coordinate with the agencies tasked with public safety? The States use all their resources to organize large-scale events. The smaller States must turn to cooperation with



other countries to achieve the above-mentioned security. However, this function does not correspond to the Ministries of Defence, but rather to coordinating committees that are formed in light of the challenge to be faced. While this does not appear to be a controversial topic, basic questions may arise; if they are secondary missions for the armed forces, they should be treated as such; however, this may not be the case in small countries with limited resources in which the security/defence visions are superimposed. Differentiation of subregional and national situations is fundamental.

- How to contend with the security concerns of other countries? An example of this was experienced at the last Summit of the Americas in Mar del Plata, where the security agencies had to deal with the pretensions of the United States security personnel.
- Importance of standardizing experiences and generating a code of conduct. Many Caribbean States have faced these challenges, such as with the World Cup of Cricket in 2007, in which 15 countries were involved in security for the event. It was a great success.
- Importance of the topic for Peru, which is to host the next European Union-Latin America and the Caribbean Summit and the APEC meeting. The armed forces are to provide support under the framework of the law that so permits.
- These missions are a way for the military to recover lost legitimacy. There are many countries that are increasingly involving their armed forces in this type of subsidiary missions (Caribbean, Central American, Mexico, Venezuela, Peru, Ecuador, Bolivia, Brazil). They also displace other civilian agencies and appropriate the budget. However, the military is performing functions assigned to it. The delimitation is thus a topic of civilian leadership.

b) Advancing with trust-building – 2: “Cooperation in peace missions”

The initial presentation emphasized the value of and need for cooperation for peace. The management of peace is today not only necessary for ethical or humanitarian reasons, but also because it is what fits best with the requirements of interdependence, competitiveness, predictability and stability. This cooperation can be done in various ways—one of its forms is participation in peace missions.

MINUSTAH demonstrates the commitment that various Latin American countries have made to cooperation for peace by jointly dealing with the mission in Haiti until achieving what is today known as the 2x9 mechanism and simultaneously advancing in trust-building. The situation in Haiti is still fragile and must be strengthened; however, it is no longer as dependent on military action but rather on effective cooperation for development that complements the success of the peacemaking operations. Cooperation for peace and cooperation for development must proceed hand-in-hand. One of the main difficulties to be faced in this regard is that the peace missions, at least MINUSTAH, do not have either the authority or capacity to work for development. At the same time, the meagre capacity of the Haitian government to plan and manage its own development makes it difficult to achieve progress in this area.

Main points of discussion:

- The Haitian experience. Regional cooperation. Good results from the political direction of MINUSTAH. The challenge of the transfer from military cooperation to police cooperation (change in the nature of the mission). How to build a State exceeds the topic of a peace mission.



- Importance of having this type of operations under civilian control and leadership.
- Form of providing new missions to the armed forces, thereby avoiding “idle soldiers”.
- Joint participation in peace operations. Creation of regional training centres (CREOMPAZ experience and Argentina’s call for a meeting to discuss the possibility of a centre for the Southern Cone). Creation of the combined Argentina-Chile peace force “Cruz del Sur”.
- Importance of increasing participation by women in this type of operations.
- Particular attention to Venezuela and Mexico, which, by constitutional mandate, do not participate in peace missions.
- Not omitting the importance of countries not included in peace missions. In the case of MINUSTAH in Haiti, States such as Mexico, the Dominican Republic, Cuba and Venezuela have made important contributions outside the mission.
- Need to pay attention to the Latin American experience with interoperativity. To a large extent, the problem has to do with the fragility of the situation that is to be strengthened and that demands effective operations for the development that complements peacemaking.

c) *Advancing in trust-building – 3: “Cooperation in natural disasters”*

Reflection on the need for internal and external military cooperation in cases of natural disasters or manmade disasters occupies an important position on the agendas of the various countries, in particular those of lesser size and development. The military is a reserve of human capital and of engineering and logistical assets, etc. No government creates a special reserve of civilians for games [sic] every 30 years or for when natural disasters occur. The military thus becomes a permanently available resource. It is not advisable to wait for the disaster to arrive to begin planning hemispheric cooperation efforts. The importance of having certain general principles for reconstruction such as recognition and integration of survivor mechanisms of the local agencies carrying out assistance and mediation was indicated, thereby depoliticizing the aid and assistance and ensuring a clear objective of helping the population by mitigating the damage. The importance of creating a protocol for humanitarian assistance at a future Conference was also stressed. An example of the problem that was cited was the passage of Hurricane Ivan through Jamaica in 2004 and the lessons learned (lack of institutional capacity and the importance of designing a rapid recovery strategy, a rapid response that is in turn participative, and diagnostic tools to assist in analysis and decision-making).

Main points of discussion:

- Role of the defence area but intersectoral nature. Difficulty with interagency cooperation.
- Military intervention as a first response to the emergency. Logistical capacity provided by the armed forces. Humanitarian assistance. The armed forces are not the only tool for action in case of disasters, but they are a highly trained resource and have the advantage of being very disciplined with a vertical command.
- Strengthening of civil defence security so that they can perform in disaster situations, with no need to increase the budget of the armed forces.
- Importance of sharing and standardizing experiences. Creation of immediate assistance protocols (agreements between countries). Establishment of codes for this type of operations so as to prevent mechanisms from being only *ad hoc*.



- Construction of register of capacities (both national and between countries).
- Need for intersectoral work on disaster topics.
- Importance of offering training centres alongside peace operations. Make use of the good practices of certain countries.
- Improve communication capacities.
- Suggestion that a case study be carried out—a simulation exercise with no political consequence (tsunami)—to analyze actions and their strengths and weaknesses.

Conclusions and proposals

After a day and a half of discussions, a space for conclusions took place so that each participant from civil society and academia could specifically suggest the topics that the next Conference of Ministers should discuss and those points to which special attention should be paid to ensure the success of the hemispheric meeting.

The need for the following was indicated:

- Recovery of the Williamsburg principles: “Democracy and its impact on mutual security”.
 - Ministries of Defence must pursue modernization of the reforms and return to the Williamsburg principles.
 - Subordination of the armed forces to democratically elected authorities.
 - Institutionality. Strengthening of Ministries of Defence. Modernization of political structures.
 - Armed forces and society: role of women and of native peoples.
 - Interinstitutional coordination. Ministries of Defence, armed forces and parliament.
 - Transparency in defence institutions. Budgets and access to information. Bilateral experiences.
 - Training of the armed forces. Education
 - Military justice.
 - Training of civilians.
 - Acceptance of differences in the training of the military and the police with respect to the use of force.
- Trust-building
 - Cooperation in peace missions. Women in peace missions.
 - Forum for evaluation of peace missions. Subregional experiences.
 - Cooperation in natural disasters and major events. Cooperation with other State agencies. Human rights.
 - Cooperation in matters of military education.
 - White papers: discussion on their scope and usefulness.
- Strengthening of the Inter-American Hemispheric Security System. OAS-CSH-JID relations. Subregional systems.



- Security topics with a different perspective depending on the subregion. It is necessary to have mutual education, recognize the perspective of the other party, and understand the perspective of civil society.
- In the same way that an informal dialogue was established at the OAS between civil society organizations and foreign ministries, it is important to organize a dialogue between civil society in the Americas and the Ministers of Defence.

Certain special considerations:

- The weight of certain national armies that block civilian authority cannot be ignored. Primarily in Central America, there is opposition to the development of Ministries of Defence with real structures and functions.
- Caribbean participants have affirmed the need for civilian-military subregional cooperation to deal with certain problems of internal security (transnational organized crime) in the face of threats from non-State actors, for example by means of protocols for assistance from other countries.
- This leads to one of the topics that generates the most controversy—the roles and functions of the armed forces. For some, this is a topic that should not be discussed, given the risk of militarization and of falling into the fruitless debate of the differentiation between defence and security. Others affirm the need to debate these topics, and to find creative means of addressing them, even with the subregional differences they involve.
- A suggestion in this regard consists of the need for mutual education for better understanding. One initiative is the possibility of generating dialogue between the Ministers and civil society the day prior to the start of the Conference, as occurs at the Summit of the Americas or at meetings under the framework of the OAS.
- The fight against terrorism, weapons sales, and the armed forces and development should not be part of the agenda due to the polarized views that exist with respect to this topic.

Following the formal closing by the organizers, the Canadian delegation expressed its thanks, especially for the preparation, frankness and openness of each of the participants, which contributed to achieving the main objective of this consultation, that is to say, listening to non-governmental sectors in the hemisphere with the ability to provide input in matters of security and defence, with a view to the challenges of the upcoming continental conference.

INCLUDED AS ANNEXES:

SCHEDULE

LIST OF PARTICIPANTS

WORK SCHEDULE

LIST OF POSITION PAPERS