

“Vienna Memorandum”



The Role of Ombuds Institutions in Promoting and Protecting the Human Rights of Soldiers and Veterans

Final Declaration of the 2nd International Conference of Ombuds Institutions for the Armed Forces

“Vienna Memorandum”

The 2nd International Conference of Ombuds Institutions for the Armed Forces, hosted in Vienna, Austria, from 25 to 28 April 2010 takes ahead the cooperation process of these independent institutions, as is expressed in the “Berlin Declaration”, according to which the control of armed forces assumes an important role in countries with a democratic constitution, by providing transparency and reinforcing confidence in the armed forces.

The long-term goal is to strengthen the various legal and other framework conditions for these controlling bodies, as far as they have been installed, which currently exist in various shapes, ranging from parliamentary ombuds institutions to military bodies in charge of controlling the armed forces.

The Vienna Conference is focused on the role of ombuds institutions in promoting and protecting the human rights of soldiers in peacetime and during operations as well as their welfare after an operation.

Against this background, the “Vienna Memorandum” is to lay the basis for a successful international cooperation in the interest and for the benefit of all soldiers.

The conferees declare that

- (1) The promotion and protection of the human rights of soldiers and veterans in peacetime and during operations is a central concern,
- (2) Particular attention is paid to a respectful handling of the diversity in armed forces with regard to gender, sexual orientation, ethnicity and religion,
- (3) Increased attention is paid to the effects of a possible post-traumatic stress disorder of soldiers,
- (4) The support and the welfare of the families of members of armed forces are of great importance,

- (5) The various legal and other framework conditions for ombuds institutions for the armed forces are to be strengthened and a handbook and a website on the situation of the ombuds institutions in the respective countries is to be developed,
- (6) It should be considered to facilitate cooperation between ombudsman institutions in order to support and protect human rights, fundamental freedoms und welfare of soldiers in international military operations,
- (7) The periodic continuation of the cooperation process be kept up,
- (8) The conference will be continued in Serbia in 2011, and
- (9) Canada and Norway have been approached to host a conference in 2012 and 2013, respectively.

Vienna, 27 April 2010