

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

15ICOAF



The 15th International Conference of Ombuds Institutions for the Armed Forces – 15ICOAF

**Governing the Impacts of Climate Change
– Ombuds Institutions and the Armed Forces**

18-20 June 2023 | Vienna, Austria

Programme Overview

Sunday, June 18

All day **Arrival and registration of conference participants**

18:00 – 19:00 Delegates meet for an aperitif with appetizers
in the Hotel Steigenberger Bar

19:00 – 21:00 Welcome Dinner in the Hotel Steigenberger Restaurant

Monday, June 19

08:00 – 08:45 Arrival and security check-in at the conference venue

09:00 – 09:45 Conference Opening

09:45 – 10:15 Group Photo

10:15 – 10:45 Coffee Break

10:45 – 12:15 **Session 1: The Nexus of Climate Change and Security
– Implications for the Armed Forces**

12:15 – 13:15 Lunch

13:15 – 14:45 **Session 2: Acclimatising the Armed Forces
– What Role for Ombuds Institutions?**

14:45 – 15:15 Coffee Break

15:15 – 16:15 **Session 3: Greening Ombuds Institutions**

16:15 – 17:30 Free time

17:30 Delegates meet for departure by bus to the *Museum of Military History*
in the Hotel Steigenberger lobby

18:00 – 19:00 Arrival and reception at the *Museum of Military History*
and a guided tour on request

19:00 – 22:00 Dinner in the Ruhmeshalle of the *Museum of Military History*

Tuesday, June 20

08:00 – 08:45	Arrival and security check-in at the conference venue
09:00 – 11:00	Session 4: The Armed Forces and Mental Health
11:00 – 11:30	Coffee Break
11:30 – 12:00	Special Session: International Cooperation among Ombuds Institutions
12:00 – 13:15	Lunch
13:15 – 14:45	Session 5: Shifts in Defence Policy and Consequences for Ombuds Institutions
14:45 – 15:15	Coffee Break
15:15 – 16:00	Adoption of the Conference Statement
16:00 – 16:15	Announcement of the 16 th ICOAF in Berlin 2024
16:15 – 16:30	Closing Remarks

- End of the official conference programme -

Optional Programme

16:30 – 17:30	Guide of the Parliamentary Building
19:00 – 22:00	Cultural Activity: The Viennese “Heurige”

Preface

About the Co-Hosts

DCAF – the Geneva Centre for Security Sector Governance is dedicated to improving the security of states and their people within a framework of democratic governance, the rule of law, respect for human rights, and gender equality. Since its founding in 2000, the organisation has contributed to making peace and development more sustainable by assisting partner states, and international actors supporting these states, to improve the governance of their security sector through inclusive and participatory reforms. DCAF creates innovative knowledge products, promotes norms and good practices, provides legal and policy advice, and supports capacity-building of both state and non-state security sector stakeholders.

DCAF is committed to supporting ombuds institutions by virtue of their capacity to hold state institutions accountable and strengthen democratic governance. To this end, the DCAF ombuds programme promotes the key role of ombuds institutions vis-à-vis the armed forces and international actors, engages directly with ombuds institutions bi-laterally, and furthermore fosters and facilitates cooperation among and between them to enhance their effectiveness and capacity.

The Austrian Parliamentary Commission for the Federal Armed Forces is this year's co-host of 15ICOAF. As a democratic control body mandated to protect the rights and fundamental freedoms of members of the Austrian Armed Forces, the Commission receives and examines complaints and conducts *ex officio* investigations on the suspicion of shortcomings or irregularities in the military.

Cooperation Partners

The 15th International Conference of Ombuds Institutions for the Armed Forces (15ICOAF) has been made possible thanks to the close cooperation and generous support of the German Federal Foreign Office sponsoring DCAF's ombuds programme.



Supported by the German Foreign Office

Introduction

As one of the greatest challenges of the 21st century, climate change affects all areas of social, economic, political, and public life. In the context of security sector governance (SSG), climate-related security risks and their implications have become increasingly manifest and a focus of political attention and academic research. Consequently, armed forces across the globe are compelled to reckon with a new reality that fundamentally affects their mandate and *modus operandi*. Today, the armed forces are expected to address climate-related security risks, strengthen their operational presence in climate-related disasters and humanitarian crises across the globe, and to themselves reduce their greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions and overall ecological footprint.

The increasingly frequent deployment of armed forces in the assistance of civilian authorities in the event of natural disasters, as well as in contexts marred by climate-related security risks requires ombuds institutions to reflect on their role in overseeing these deployments in pursuit of their mandate to protect human rights and promote principles of good governance within the security sector. Furthermore, as armed forces re-assess and adapt their strategic and operational planning in the face of mounting climate-related challenges – among others, by reducing their own carbon footprint – ombuds institutions can play an instrumental role in ensuring these changes do not come at the expense of the rights of service personnel, their well-being, and, by extension, the democratic governance and the rule of law. Lastly, efforts to combat climate change require holistic responses that reach beyond the confines of one institution, sector, and even society. As much as ombuds institutions are well positioned to oversee changes within the armed forces, they themselves can do their part by reflecting on their own impact on the climate and the environment and articulating response strategies.

This year's conference aims to provide ombuds delegates with the space to explore the impact of climate change on the armed forces, delineate and concretise how this impact translates into changes within the confines of their own work, and exchange experiences and best practices looking forward. Past iterations of ICOAF have addressed climate-change related issues, most notably in the context of armed forces deployed to assist civilian authorities. Considering the scale of the climate change challenge and its universally felt impact across virtually all domains of public and private life, this year's ICOAF builds, expands, and elaborates on previously held discussions to establish a common baseline of understanding among the ICOAF constituency on climate change and related issues.

Nonetheless, conversations on climate change are relatively new within the context of ICOAF and there may only be a few ombuds institutions who have comprehensively engaged with the topic, let alone adjusted elements of their work to account for climate-related challenges. Therefore, as was the case with previous conferences, space will be made to discuss topics of recurring and cross-cutting nature to build upon past exchanges, as well as for contemporary issues that bear significant relevance to the work of ombuds institutions at large. In 2023, ICOAF's agenda includes a session on mental health within the armed forces – building on the fruitful discussions on the right to health of armed forces personnel during 14ICOAF – as well as a session on how the war in Ukraine and the concomitant geopolitical shift is experienced from the perspective of ombuds institutions.

Objectives and Methodology

This conference hopes to draw upon lessons learned from previous ICOAFs and to continue fostering a dynamic and participatory environment conducive to generating new ideas and insights.

The objective of 15ICOAF is to *raise awareness, facilitate and foster peer-to-peer exchange of knowledge and best practices, and articulate future policy responses* among ombuds institutions on issues of climate change, mental health, and a shifting geopolitical landscape. To this end, participants are invited to explore and reflect on these issues across carefully curated panel sessions, as well as across the various spaces for dialogue provided by the framework of the conference. A background paper is made available prior to the conference and forms an integral part of the conference package due to the novelty and complexity of the overarching theme. Good practices shared during the conference are furthermore compiled and endorsed by participants in a non-binding Conference Statement at the conference's closing.

On the first day, dedicated to unpacking the overarching theme of climate change, session one aims to frame and stimulate subsequent discussions by establishing a common baseline of understanding vis-à-vis the nexus of climate change, security, and the armed forces. Therein, climate change's impact on the armed forces is conceptually mapped across the domains of (1) adapting the armed forces to operate in contexts characterised by climate change-related challenges; (2) the evolving mandate and scope of armed forces deployment in the context of climate-related disasters and



humanitarian crises; and (3) greening defence efforts by defence sectors seeking to reduce their emissions footprint and negative impact on the natural environment. The second session aims to focus the exchange on the role of ombuds institutions overseeing and supporting climate-related changes within the armed forces, providing the space to share lessons learned and best practices. The third and final panel session on climate change redirects attention towards the practices of ombuds offices themselves, reviewing the degree and manner in which ombuds institutions have themselves initiated changes within their working environments to address climate change related challenges. On day two, space is made for the recurring and contemporary topics in session four on mental health within the armed forces and session five on the broader effects on ombuds institutions following current geopolitical shifts against the backdrop of the Ukraine war.

Prior to the conference, a registration form and accompanying questionnaire is routinely circulated among the ICOAF community on issues pertaining to the conference programme. Participants possess vast experiences in handling and responding to complaints. They are expected and encouraged to share their experiences – both positive practices and gaps in capacity – to draw out valuable lessons and identify pertinent areas of need that may prove to be informative to their peers. The participation at the conference is by invitation only. The registration is compulsory. The conference opening and first session is open to the public and press. The rest of 15ICOAF, however, is closed to the public and will operate under Chatham House Rules unless otherwise noted.

Sunday, 18 June 2023

Arrival and registration of conference participants

15:00 – 18:00, Lobby of the Steigenberger Hotel

*A dedicated registration desk will be set up in the lobby of the Steigenberger Hotel allowing arriving conference participants to register in person and collect the conference package. Importantly, the conference package will include a **unique QR-code** that is required to enter the premises of the conference venue, the Austrian Parliament Building (Dr. Karl Renner-Ring 3, 1017 Wien, Austria). Our friendly staff will be on hand to assist you with any inquiries or special requests you may have. We kindly request that you bring a valid form of identification for the registration process.*

18:00 – 19:00, Steigenberger Hotel Bar

Delegates are invited to meet for an aperitif with appetizers in the Steigenberger Hotel Bar.

19:00 – 21:00, Steigenberger Hotel Restaurant

Delegates are invited to a welcome dinner in the Steigenberger Hotel Restaurant hosted by the Geneva Centre for Security Sector Governance – DCAF, owing to the generous support of the German Federal Foreign Office.

Monday, 19 June 2023

08:00 – 08:45

To ensure a prompt start to the conference and to avoid unnecessary queues or inconvenience, we kindly ask you arrive at the conference venue, the Austrian Parliament Building (Dr. Karl Renner-Ring 3, 1017 Wien, Austria), with ample time for arrival, registration, and security check-in procedures. By arriving early, you will also have the opportunity to network and reconnect with fellow conference participants, familiarize yourself with the conference venue, and prepare yourself mentally for the enriching program ahead.

Conference Opening

09:00 – 09:45

MODERATOR:

Dr. Reinhard E. **Bösch**, Chairman of the Austrian Parliamentary Commission for the Federal Armed Forces, Former Member of the National Council of Austria

SPEAKERS:

Wolfgang **Sobotka**, President of the National Council of Austria

Robert **Laimer**, Executive Chairman of the Austrian Parliamentary Commission for the Federal Armed Forces, Member of the National Council of Austria

Klaudia **Tanner**, Federal Minister of Defence of Austria

Amb. Nathalie **Chuard**, Director of DCAF – The Geneva Centre for Security Sector Governance

MUSICAL INTERLUDE:

Ensemble Gardemusik, Austrian Armed Forces

PHOTO OPPORTUNITY

09:45 – 10:15

COFFEE BREAK

10:15 – 10:45



SESSION 1: The Nexus of Climate Change and Security – Implications for the Armed Forces

10:45 – 12:15

MODERATOR:

Amb. Nathalie **Chuard**, Director of DCAF – The Geneva Centre
for Security Sector Governance

SPEAKERS:

Prof. Dr. Karl W. **Steininger**, Professor of Climate Economics and Sustainable
Transition, Wegener Centre for Climate Change and Global Change,
University of Graz, Austria

Janani **Vivekananda**, Head of Programme Climate Diplomacy and Security, Adelphi

Major General Bruno Günter **Hofbauer**, Capability Director,
Ministry of Defence of Austria

Objective:

This session aims to explore and map out the impact of climate change on security, and more specifically the armed forces. It intends to frame and stimulate subsequent discussions by establishing a common baseline of understanding. It does not reference the role of ombuds institutions, which will be explored in-depth in sessions two and three.

Climate change, affecting all areas of social, economic, political, and public life, is increasingly framed and recognised as a security issue. Climate change issues are frequently addressed in explicit reference to their security implications, be it within the confines of the United Nations Security Council (UNSC), national security strategy documents of more than half of the world's states, or across the wide range of policy and research publications which point to the intersection between climate change and security. In recent years, these points of intersection and the corresponding threat have become more salient in the form of record-setting extreme weather events and narratives of the first climate-change induced conflicts.



Considering these developments, armed forces across the globe are compelled to reckon with a new reality that fundamentally affects their mandate and modus operandi. Today, they are expected to strengthen their support of civilian authorities in climate-related disasters and humanitarian crises across the globe, adapt their operational capabilities to function in adverse conditions, and to themselves reduce their greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions and overall ecological footprint.

The relationship between climate change, (in)security, and the armed forces is complex and context specific. It is therefore important to remain cautionary of overly simplified linkages and dynamics, and of the securitisation risk, i.e., overly militarised approaches to climate change issues.

Guiding Questions:

- **Integration of climate considerations:** Are climate change-related security risks and considerations integrated into national security and defence strategies, planning, and/or policies? To what degree has such a “climate change lens” been applied on an ad hoc basis or institutionalised and mainstreamed within government agencies and defence policies?
- **Expansion of the armed forces’ mandate:** To what extent should the armed forces be tasked to address climate change-related disasters and humanitarian crises? What should the threshold be for such deployments, and do they risk the effective fulfilment of other missions the armed forces are mandated to pursue, e.g., defence of the state against external threats? Are these risks of political (e.g., lacking mandate) or of technical nature (e.g., lacking capacity)? How has the public image of the armed forces been affected by their expanding scope and scale of engagement?
- **Military deployments in the context of climate change:** Were the armed forces of your countries recently deployed (domestically or internationally) to assist civilian authorities in their fight against climate-related natural disasters or humanitarian crises? Have these deployments increased over time or changed in nature?



LUNCH

12:15 – 13:15

SESSION 2: Acclimatising the Armed Forces – What Role for Ombuds Institutions?

13:15 – 14:45

MODERATOR:

Friedrich **Ofenauer**, Chairman of the Austrian Parliamentary Commission for the Federal Armed Forces, Member of the National Council of Austria

SPEAKERS:

Major General Dr. Johann **Frank**, Director Cabinet of the Chairman of the European Union Military Committee

Dr. Eva **Högl**, Parliamentary Commissioner for the Armed Forces, Germany

Mariia **Ushchapivska**, Representative of the Commissioner for the Observance of Human Rights in the System of Bodies of the Security, Defence Sector and Procedural Rights, Parliamentary Commissioner for Human Rights, Ukraine

Atty. Beda Angeles **Epres**, Commissioner of the Commission on Human Rights, The Philippines

Objective:

Following the first session framing the bigger picture of climate change and its security implications – specifically on the armed forces – this session aims to narrow the discussion on the role of ombuds institutions in overseeing and supporting change within the armed forces. It intends to provide the space for ombuds institution representatives to share and exchange ideas and approaches relating to their institutions and respective contexts.

As custodians of good governance within the armed forces, ombuds institutions are vital in overseeing changes across the primary domains of *greening defence, adaptation of operational capabilities, and the expanding scope and scale of armed forces deployments*. This can include monitoring and evaluation of greening defence efforts and sustainable policies, scrutiny



of adjusted training regimes and hardware, as well as review of the legal mandate for expanded deployments that conventionally fall outside of the mandate for the armed forces.

However, it further requires for ombuds institutions to consolidate and strengthen their expertise on climate change-related issues, both to maintain credibility in the process of holding governments and their sustainability commitments accountable and – more importantly – to be able to receive, process, and resolve climate change-related complaints or initiate thematic investigations on systemic issues with a climate change dimension.

Guiding Questions:

- **Greening Defence:** Is the greening of the defence sector part of the public and political debate in your country? What is the state of play concerning benchmarking and monitoring greenhouse emissions of the armed forces in your country?
- **Climate change adaptations within the military:** Have the armed forces of your country adapted and strengthened their capacity to be able to operate in more severe and adverse climate conditions (e.g., limiting fuel dependency, climate-sensitive procurement and training, dedicated climate advisors during operational missions, etc.)?
- **Overseeing military deployments in the context of climate change:** How were military deployments to assist civilian authorities in their fight against climate-related natural disasters or humanitarian crises overseen? What were lessons can be drawn from these experiences?
- **Climate considerations for ombuds institutions:** Do concrete climate-related security considerations play a role in the strategic planning and/or in the daily work of your ombuds institution? If so, in what way? Has your office received complaints that relate to climate change, e.g., in relation to military adaptation and greening processes, training needs for deployments outside of the conventional mandate, environmental pollution and damage by the armed forces, etc.?



COFFEE BREAK

14:45 – 15:15

SESSION 3: Greening Ombuds Institutions

15:15 – 16:15

MODERATOR:

Daniel **Reimers**, Programme Manager, DCAF – Geneva Centre
for Security Sector Governance

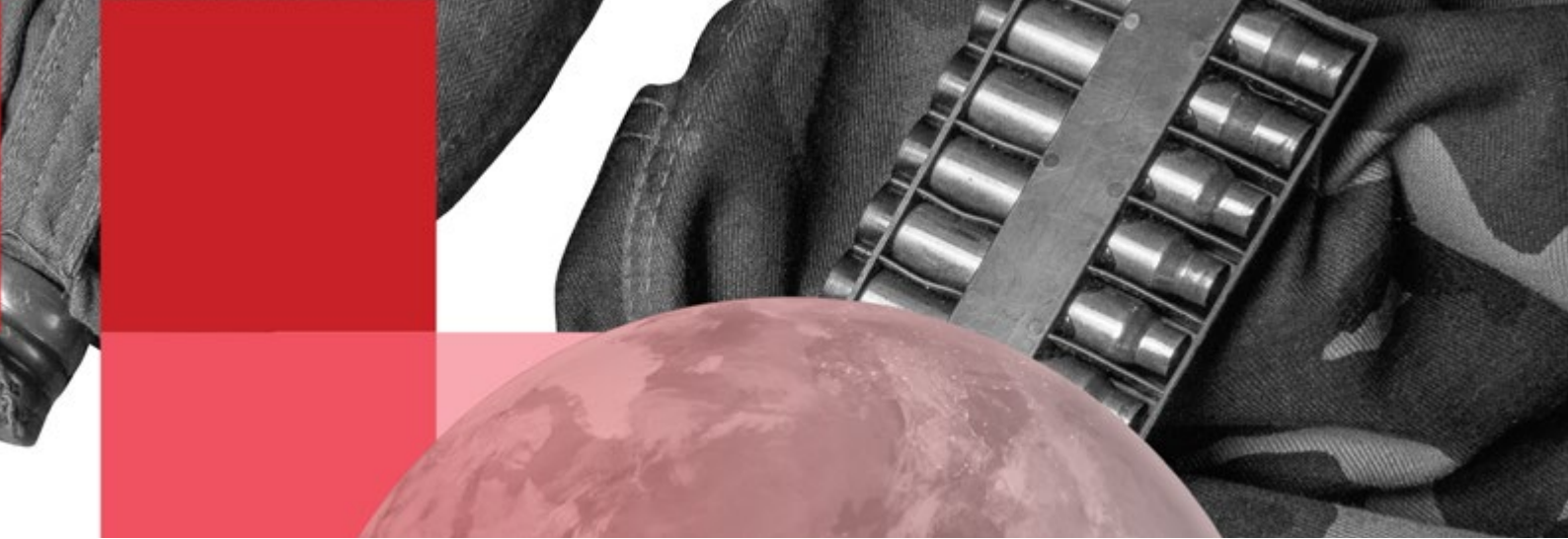
SPEAKERS:

Dietmar **Nestlang**, Director of ICT & Innovation & Infrastructure, Parliamentary
Administration, Austria

Objective:

This third session is intended to allow for participants to discuss how they themselves – representing the office of an ombuds institution – can initiate positive change and contribute to the fight against climate change.

As much as ombuds institutions are vital to respond to issues of human rights abuse, soldier welfare, or maladministration in the context of climate change and the armed forces, they themselves have a part to play by minimising their own environmental impact and carbon footprint. This reflects the increasing political imperative and know-how in making workspaces across sectors and countries more sustainable and eco-friendlier, as well as growing economic incentives and opportunities to build up capacity and strengthen resilience in the process. The public sector must act in a way consistent with the messages it promotes. Among them is climate action, a goal integrated not just in national policies, strategies, and planning but within the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) and the Sustainable development Goals, to which all states are party. For ombuds institutions, this will include climate goals, policies and strategies, with attention for concrete measures in the areas of waste and energy management, procurement, travel, etc.



Guiding Questions:

- **Climate change adaptation and mitigation policies:** Has your respective government translated sustainability and climate change-related commitments into concrete policies that apply to the ombuds office?
Has your ombuds institution developed policies and response strategies to reduce your office's environmental impact?
- **Translating policy into climate action:** To what degree are extant policies successfully implemented and operationalised? What specific actions or behaviours (of staff) are undertaken to address climate change-related challenges?
- **Monitoring progress:** Does your office monitor climate change-related indicators? Did your office in any way monitor progress?

FREE TIME

16:15 – 17:30

Cultural Activity: Visit to the Museum of Military History

17:30 – Steigenberger Hotel Lobby

Delegates are invited to meet in the Steigenberger Hotel lobby to depart by bus to the Museum of Military History, at Arsenal 1, 1030 Vienna.

18:00 – 19:00, Museum of Military History

Delegates are invited to a reception at the Museum of Military History, with an optional guided tour offered at 18:45.

18:30 – Guided Tour (Optional)

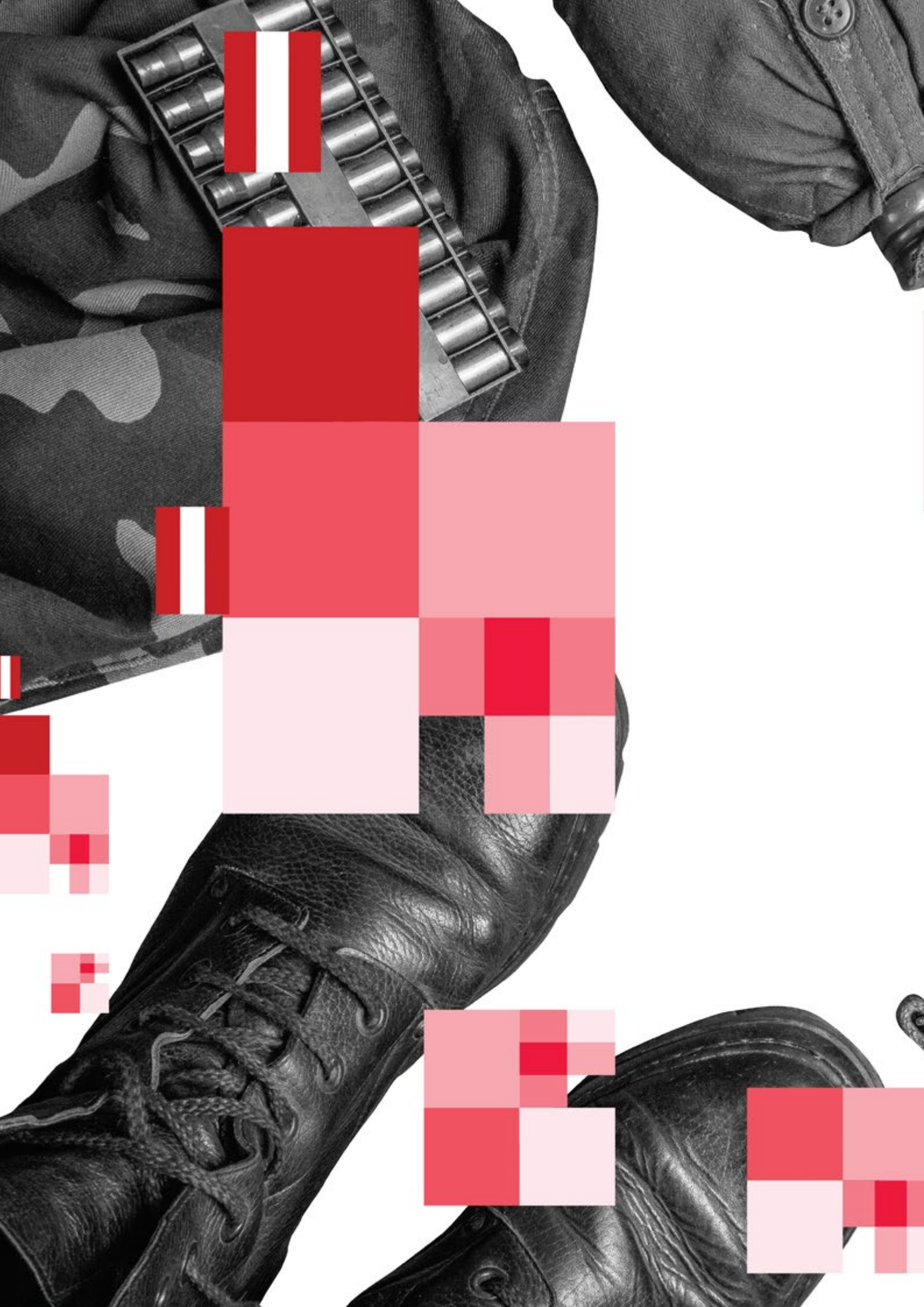
An optional guided tour of the museum will start at 18:45 and lasts approximately 30 minutes.

19:00 – 22:00, Ruhmeshalle of the Museum of Military History

Delegates are invited to a formal dinner in the Ruhmeshalle of the Museum of Military History, generously hosted by the Presidium of the Austrian Parliamentary Commission for the Federal Armed Forces:

- Robert **Laimer**, Executive Chairman of the Austrian Parliamentary Commission for the Federal Armed Forces, Member of the National Council of Austria
- Dr. Reinhard E. **Bösch**, Chairman of the Austrian Parliamentary Commission for the Federal Armed Forces, Former Member of the National Council of Austria
- Friedrich **Ofenauer**, Chairman of the Austrian Parliamentary Commission for the Federal Armed Forces, Member of the National Council of Austria







Tuesday, 20 June 2023

Arrival and security check-in at the conference venue

08:00 – 08:45

To ensure a prompt start to the conference and to avoid unnecessary queues or inconvenience, we kindly ask you arrive at the conference venue, the Austrian Parliament Building (Dr. Karl Renner-Ring 3, 1017 Wien, Austria), with ample time for arrival, registration, and security check-in procedures. By arriving early, you will also have the opportunity to network and reconnect with fellow conference participants, familiarize yourself with the conference venue, and prepare yourself mentally for the enriching program ahead.

SESSION 4: Armed Forces and Mental Health

09:00 – 11:00

MODERATOR:

Chrystal Pillay, Director of Legal Services, South African Military Ombud, South Africa

SPEAKERS:

Dr. Ramya Sundararaman, Deputy Director, Defence Suicide Prevention Office of the Department of Defence, United States of America

Emmanuel Jacob, President of the European Organisation of Military Associations and Trade Unions (EUROMIL)

Yong Won Kim, Human Rights Protector for the Military, South Korea

Gregory Lick, National Defence and Canadian Armed Forces Ombudsman, Canada



Objective:

This fourth session aims to continue and build upon the fruitful discussion during 14ICOAF on the right of armed forces personnel to health, both during and after deployment. Narrowed down to the topic of mental health, participants are invited to critically reflect on conventionally held perspectives regarding mental health, sounds out new ideas and take a fresh look at 'old' problems.

Armed forces personnel, in particular those deployed in contexts of active conflict, are at a high risk of suffering from mental health issues. High levels of exposure to stress, trauma, and the risk of injury or death are closely associated with mental health problems such as depression, anxiety, post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), and substance abuse. These invisible wounds of war are incredibly widespread – in one of the largest studies within the U.S. Military, the rate of depression among soldiers was five times as high as civilians, and the rate of PTSD was nearly 15 times higher. Left untreated, these invisible wounds heighten the risk of suicide and have devastating effects on veterans and their families. In some cases, the number of casualties of service members who died by suicide can greatly surpass the number of those killed in combat.

One of the greatest barriers to mental health treatment is the associated stigma and culture within the armed forces, the lack of resources for mental health issues, and insufficient attention for preventative measures.





Ombuds institutions play a key role in promoting and overseeing mental health matters within the armed forces by providing a safe and confidential space to voice mental health concerns – including barriers faced to access care or support – advocating for the needs of military personnel, raising awareness and reducing stigma around mental health issues, and providing guidance and support to military leaders on how to address mental health issues within their units.

Guiding Questions:

- **Identification of mental health issues:** To what extent are mental health components present within the complaints you process? Are you able to distinguish any patterns of key takeaways related to the state of mental health within the armed forces from these complaints? Has your office conducted thematic investigations into mental health issues? What are the most significant structural and systemic barriers undermining mental wellbeing?
- **Effective mental health responses:** What measures has your office taken to address mental health within the armed forces? Were these reactive or preventative and to what degree were interventions successful? What issues did they address?
- **Monitoring mental health within the armed forces:** Does your office monitor the state of mental health within the armed forces? If so, to what degree (e.g., is the data disaggregated, how long is your monitoring cycle, etc.)?

COFFEE BREAK

11:00 – 11:30



Special Session: DCAF's Support to Ombuds Institutions beyond ICOAF

11:30 – 12:00

SPEAKERS:

Daniel **Reimers**, Programme Manager, DCAF – Geneva Centre for Security Sector Governance

LUNCH

12:00 – 13:15

SESSION 5: Shifts in Defence Policy and Consequences for Ombuds Institutions

13:15 – 14:45

MODERATOR:

Dr. Arnold **Kammel**, Secretary General at the Federal Ministry of Defence, Austria

SPEAKERS:

Erika **Leonaitė**, Parliamentary Ombudsperson of the Republic of Lithuania, Lithuania

James M. **Gaynor**, Inspector-General of the Australian Defence Force, Australia

Halimatou **Dibba**, Commissioner of the National Human Rights Commission, The Gambia

Atty. Beda Angeles **Epres**, Commissioner of the Commission on Human Rights, The Philippines

Objective:

This fifth session aims to explore how current geopolitical shifts following the war in Ukraine have impacted the armed forces across the globe, and by extension, ombuds institutions. Specifically, the session will centre on three ombuds-relevant consequences of said geopolitical flux – increased military spending, greater emphasis on territorial defence, and an increased focus on hybrid warfare – to consider how ombuds institutions can better anticipate and respond to shifting needs and objectives of the armed forces.

The geopolitical landscape of the past years has been marked by uncertainty, complexity, and significant flux. Against the backdrop of a world reeling from the after-effects of the COVID-19 pandemic and the concomitant fragility



of global and interdependent supply chains, the benefits of globalisation are regarded with increasing scrutiny. This has led to the formation of new geopolitical blocs – both formal in the shape of alliances and informal through trade corridors and barriers. Furthermore, established and stabilising patterns of power dynamics are altering, and so are the rationales and calculations underlying the use of force. Nowhere is this more apparent than in the dramatic escalation of the Russia-Ukraine conflict after Russia's invasion of Ukraine in February 2022. As the economic toll of the war ripples throughout economies far and wide and the spectre of a revived Cold War looms large, countries are revisiting their security and defence policies and adjusting them to the new multipolar world order. Lastly, environmental challenges and coinciding concerns over resource scarcity, migration flows, and extreme weather events, will generate new geopolitical fault lines and raise the potential for conflict.

As power dynamics shift, economic tensions rise, and environmental challenges grow, nations will need to adapt to a rapidly changing world and find new ways to address global problems. Significant impacts of these developments are manifest in the security and defence policies throughout the world. The most pertinent changes concern:

- **Increased military spending:** The changing geopolitical context is most evident in trends in world military expenditure, which has surpassed the two trillion US dollar mark for the first time in 2021. Following the Russian invasion of Ukraine, this trend is likely to drastically accelerate.
- **Greater emphasis on territorial defence:** Russia's invasion of Ukraine has led to a greater emphasis on territorial and collective defence, resulting in increasing investments in border security, developing new military capabilities for defending against hybrid threats, and enhancing the resilience of critical infrastructure.
- **Increased focus on hybrid warfare:** Warfare today is increasingly being waged by use of hybrid warfare tactics, involving a combination of conventional military force, irregular forces, propaganda, and cyberattacks. This has led to a greater focus on developing strategies to counter such tactics.



These changes will be directly felt by members of the armed forces and thereby carry relevance for the work of ombuds institutions. Anticipating these shifts and understanding the underlying trends that drive them will be crucial for ombuds institution staff to effectively fulfil their mandate.

Guiding Questions:

- **Mapping the impact of geopolitical flux:** What impact did the war in Ukraine or related geopolitical changes have on the armed forces within your domestic context (e.g., increased military budgets, shifts in international cooperation, changing operational priorities, etc.)? How did that impact translate within the confines of your work?
- **Defence reform and ombuds institutions:** Is the ombuds institution consulted or included within discussions on defence reform, e.g., on changes in defence budgets and concomitant consequences for the armed forces?
- **Perceptions of change from armed forces personnel:** Have you been able to observe shifting demands and needs from members of the armed forces? Are you able to link these shifts to current geopolitical changes?

COFFEE BREAK

14:45 – 15:15



Adoption of the Conference Statement

15:15 – 16:00

SPEAKERS:

Daniel **Reimers**, Programme Manager, DCAF – Geneva Centre
for Security Sector Governance

Announcement of the 16th ICOAF in Berlin 2024

16:00 – 16:15

SPEAKERS:

Dr. Eva **Högl**, Parliamentary Commissioner for the Armed Forces, Germany

Closing Remarks

16:15 – 16:30

SPEAKERS:

Robert **Laimer**, Executive Chairman of the Austrian Parliamentary Commission
for the Federal Armed Forces, Member of the National Council of Austria

Friedrich **Ofenauer**, Chairman of the Austrian Parliamentary Commission
for the Federal Armed Forces, Member of the National Council of Austria

Dr. Reinhard E. **Bösch**, Chairman of the Austrian Parliamentary Commission
for the Federal Armed Forces, Former Member of the National Council of Austria

Dr. Hans **Born**, Assistant Director, Head of the Policy and Research Department,
DCAF – Geneva Centre for Security Sector Governance





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Parlamentarische
Bundesheerkommission

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