

**WORLD VETERANS FEDERATION  
22ND Meeting of the Standing  
Committee on European Affairs (SCEA)  
Kiev (Ukraine), 26-28 May 2011**

**REPORT OF THE MEETING**

**“Friendship Across Borders”**

**1. OPENING OF THE MEETING**

The Chairman, Mr. Dan–Viggo Bergtun (Norway) opened the 22<sup>nd</sup> meeting of the SCEA. First he thanked the hosts for their help and support in the organization and administration of this meeting in the beautiful and peaceful city of Kiev. He especially expressed gratitude to Gen. Col. Vorontsov, Chairman of the All-Ukrainian Union of War Veterans, Maj. Gen. Chervonopiskiy, Chairman of the Ukrainian Union of Afghanistan Veterans and also the Ukrainian Government and its representatives. Mr. Bergtun also warmly welcomed members, the Executive Board, observers and guests. He wished for a good and fruitful meeting and hoped that all participants would contribute to the discussions on the important matters that would be addressed.

**2. ROLL CALL OF THE DELEGATIONS PRESENT**

A roll call confirmed that member associations of 21 countries were represented. Also one representative from Germany was present as an observer. Several representatives of member associations from other WVF regions, observers and invited guest were present.

**3. ADOPTION OF THE AGENDA**

The agenda was adopted unanimously.

**4. ELECTION OF THE VICE PRESIDENT AND GENERAL RAPPORTEUR**

Mr. Robert Creange (France) was re-elected unanimously as Vice President of the SCEA.

Mr. Kjetil Valrygg (Norway) was elected unanimously as General Rapporteur of the SCEA.

**5. REPORT OF MR. DAN-VIGGO BERGTUN, CHAIRMAN OF THE SCEA**

In his report Mr. Bergtun recalled the main activities over the last 3 years since the last SCEA meeting in Lisbon in May 2008. The theme “Making a difference for our veterans” had been the leading practice over these 3 years. Mr. Bergtun pointed out that the organization’s work had changed dramatically due to lack of funding during the global financial crises. Because of this some projects had been abandoned and some postponed. Working methods to achieve faster results more efficiently and with less cost have been assessed. Future methods will be presented later on in this meeting.

Mr. Bergtun also commented on SCEA's implementation of the Strategic Plan 2009-2014. It was adopted by the WVF 26<sup>th</sup> General Assembly in Copenhagen 2009 and it stated:

*"The mission: To be the leading organization promoting wellbeing and providing assistance and aid to veterans and victims of war and assisting the international community in the promoting of international peace and security".*

This gave three strategic goals:

Firstly:

*"Become a more veteran-focused organization by providing comprehensive services to members and non-members."*

Here Mr. Bergtun noted that SCEA had reviewed earlier focus and found that in these times of little resources too much time was spent on non-veteran issues. To prioritize our veterans, the Veterans Health and Welfare International Cooperation Working Group, would coordinate all work on a global basis. A full report on their work would be presented at the next General Assembly.

Secondly:

*"Become an activist organization of the promotion of international peace and security."*

Mr. Bergtun commented that as a responsible member of the international community, the WVF supports and assists the United Nations in their effort to promote international peace and security. Therefore a Division for Peace and Security had been established. This Division was headed by the Chairman of SCEA.

One of the main tasks for this Division was to organize the annual global "veterans walk for peace." This event was held on 21 September, the same day as the International Day of Peace. Many SCEA members participated in this event and this had been noticed internationally. Together with the veterans work on promoting human Rights, this had opened doors in to the EU, The Council of Europe, NATO, UN and UNESCO.

Thirdly:

*"Become a financially independent organization."*

Here Mr. Bergtun noted that the financial situation of the WVF was still strained and under constant observation. A lot of work had been done to find more attractive income opportunities and the SCEA/WVF has succeeded in some areas. The SCEA/WVF encouraged all members to pay their dues and to support the WVF financially.

The financial situation was a vital and basic element of all the work in the WVF. Therefore a long-term goal had been prepared.

In paragraph 10 of this report you will find a summary of SCEA's project: "Friendship across borders".

## **6. COUNTRY REPORTS**

The member associations had been requested to prepare in advance a report on their main activities over the last 2 years.

Reports of the member associations of the following 21 countries were submitted and/or orally presented:

Albania, Croatia, Cyprus, Denmark, Finland, Germany, Israel, Portugal, Serbia, Sweden, Turkey, Ukraine, United Kingdom, Slovenia, Norway, Holland, France, Bulgaria, Russia Palestine and Poland.

The report from the UK representative Lieutenant Colonel Joe F. Falzon received much attention. Here he gave a summary of a research project undertaken by The Royal British Legion. The project was a wide-ranging research project on the ex-Service community in Britain, and the hardships they may face.

To ensure future social service delivery the needs of today's young veterans were studied, something which clearly differs from the veterans of World War II.

To view the complete project report, go to:

<http://www.britishlegion.org.uk/campaigning/research-information/legion-research>

**7. FOLLOW UP TO DECISIONS TAKEN AT THE 26<sup>TH</sup> GENERAL ASSEMBLY, HELD IN COPENHAGEN, (DENMARK) ON 19-23 OCTOBER 2009**

**7.2. RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE 21<sup>ST</sup> MEETING OF THE SCEA, WHICH WAS HELD IN LISBON (PORTUGAL) ON 6-11 APRIL 2008**

**8. FOLLOW UP TO THE 7<sup>TH</sup> INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON LEGISLATION CONCERNING VETERANS AND VICTIMS OF WAR, HELD IN PARIS (FRANCE) ON 24-26 NOVEMBER 2010.**

The Secretary General Mr. Mohammed Benjelloun took the floor and noted the following:

**Follow up given to the resolutions adopted by the 26<sup>th</sup> General Assembly:**

It was decided that it was up to the Secretary General to make proposals to the members of the Executive Board for follow-up to be given to the resolutions adopted by the 26<sup>th</sup> General Assembly.

The members of the Executive Board were informed that this item had been included on the agendas for the Standing Committee meetings which would take place in Kiev, Manila and Oslo. The Members of the committees were requested to send their reports on these matters to the Secretariat.

Circular letters were also sent out on several occasions to all member associations in order to draw up a report summarizing the follow-up given to resolutions. On 25 January 2010, the report on the plenary sessions and the resolutions adopted by the 26<sup>th</sup> General Assembly were sent to all member associations. On 1 February 2011 a reminder letter was sent to them insisting that they should send in a report summarizing the follow-up to the resolutions,

**International Conference on Legislation Concerning Veterans and Victims of War:**

The report of the General Rapporteur as well as the Final Document which was adopted by the Conference was sent to the member associations, governments and national and international organizations on 24 March 2011. Governments and associations appreciated the contents of these documents.

## **Recommendations of the 21<sup>st</sup> meeting of the SCEA, which was held in Lisbon (Portugal) on 6-11 April 2008**

Six recommendations were adopted unanimously, one of them (number 5) with two amendments, to be submitted to the Executive Board:

- 1) Against Terrorism (submitted by Veterans League, Portugal)
- 2) Medical Assistance (Submitted by Associations of Armed Forces Handicapped, ADFA, Portugal)
- 3) Social Inclusion of Disabled Servicemen and Veterans (submitted by Association of Armed Forces Handicapped, ADFA, Portugal)
- 4) Disabled Servicemen in New Countries (Submitted by Association of Armed Forces Handicapped, ADFA, Portugal)
- 5) The Compensatory Nature of the Pensions and Benefits Granted to the Disabled Servicemen (Submitted by Association of Armed Forces Handicapped, ADFA, Portugal)
- 6) For a World Free of Nuclear Weapons (submitted by The French Union of War Veterans and War Victims Associations, UFAC)

(The texts of the adopted Recommendations were distributed to the delegates).

## **9. RECOMMENDATIONS**

Recommendations 1, 2 and 4 were adopted unanimously. Recommendation 3 was adopted with amendments and abstentions from Norway and Israel.

The following recommendations were submitted to the Executive Board:

1. First Convention on the Rights of Disabled Persons Voted by the United Nations (submitted by the Association of Armed Forces Handicapped, ADFA, Portugal)
2. Health and Welfare (submitted by the Association of Armed Forces Handicapped, ADFA, Portugal)
3. Relief for the refugees and internally displaced persons (submitted by the Alliance of the Former Fighters of the People's Liberation War in Serbia, SUBNOR,, Serbia)
4. Against Xenophobia and Racism in Europe (submitted by the French Union of Associations of Veterans and Victims of war, UFAC, France)

(The texts of the adopted recommendations were distributed to the delegates)

## **10. SPECIAL SESSION/ 11. FUTURE ACTIVITIES**

Finally Mr. Bergtun presented a new project for SCEA. It was called "Friendship Across Borders". This project has the following project objectives:

- To further friendly relations among national as well as international organizations of veterans and victims of war.
- To encourage cooperation between national organizations and the exchange of expertise and experience in all field of interest.
- Become an activist organization in the promotion of international peace and security.

The project has the following strategic goals:

- Become a more veteran-focused organization by providing comprehensive services to members and non-members
- Become an activist organization of the promotion of international peace and security
- Become a financially independent organization

To run this project, Mr. Bergtun proposed to establish 7 working groups in different areas:

1. SCEA Working Group on Northern European Countries (Mr. Asplund, Finland)  
Denmark, Finland, Norway, Sweden, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania
2. SCEA Working Group on Eastern European Countries (Mr. Chervonopysky, Ukraine)  
Commonwealth of Independent States, Czech Republic, Georgia, Hungary, Poland, Romania, Slovakia
3. SCEA Working Group on Southern European Countries (Mr. Arruda, Portugal)  
Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, Cyprus, Greece, Israel, Italy, Kosovo, Macedonia, Montenegro, Palestine, Portugal, Serbia, Slovenia, Spain, Turkey
4. SCEA Working Group on Western European Countries (Mr. Seijn, Netherlands)  
Austria, France, Germany, Luxemburg, Netherlands, United Kingdom, CIAPG - Confédération Internationale des Anciens Prisonniers de Guerre (French)
5. SCEA Working Group on Women (Mrs. Nedergaard, Denmark)
6. SCEA Working Group on Memory (Mr. Chilczuk, Poland)
7. SCEA Working Group on Veteran Health and Welfare ( Mr. Weerts, Netherlands)

(In parentheses, each group's representative)

The main issues for each working group would be the following:

- Find out what is needed and wanted from our members.
- Establish programs for all working groups covering these areas.
- Veterans Health and Welfare.
- Peace and Security. Walk for Peace. Human Rights.
- New members.
- Fundraising.
- Memorials.
- Coordinated Activities
- Communication.
- Women and Victims of war

The project would be a 3 year project. A full report would be presented at the next SCEA meeting.

The presentation was followed by a wide discussion. Most of the delegates supported the project and were looking forward to starting the work.

The Chairman of SCEA, Mr. Bergtun, concluded that he was very pleased with the support received. He wished all countries the best of luck in the new working groups.

**Vice President of WVF, Lt. Gen. Daniel Pieter Knobel** presented a report of the Working Group on the study of Recognition, Commemoration and Reconciliation. This report will be sent out separately.

**British Legion Survey, by Lt. Col. Falzon**

The UK representative Lieutenant Colonel Joe F. Falzon presented more highlights from the survey. As a result of the economic backdrop, there was a great risk that our veteran's pensions and living standards would decrease.

To view the complete project report, go to:

<http://www.britishlegion.org.uk/campaigning/research-information/legion-research>

**Proposal by President d'Honneur**

SCEA should approach the Council of Europe to state that the living standards and pensions of world veterans cannot decrease due to the fact that they were prepared to sacrifice their health to serve their country.

**The work carried out by the Ukrainian Union of Afghanistan Veterans (USVA) for their Afghanistan Veterans**

Mr. Chervonopysky presented what USVA does for their Afghanistan veterans.

**11. OTHER MATTERS**

This item on the adopted agenda was not dealt with during the meeting.

**12. DATE AND PLACE OF THE 23<sup>RD</sup> MEETING OF THE STANDING COMMITTEE ON EUROPEAN AFFAIRS**

It was decided that the 23<sup>rd</sup> meeting of the SCEA would be held in 2014. The place and exact date will be fixed later.

The country of Montenegro offered to host the next meeting on their very beautiful coastline.

**13. CLOSING OF THE MEETING**

Mr. Bergtun thanked the Ukrainian hosts for their outstanding hospitality. He expressed special thanks to Gen. Col. Vorontsov, Chairman of the All-Ukrainian Union of War Veterans, Maj. Gen. Chervonopiskiy, Chairman of the Ukrainian Union of Afghanistan Veterans and also to the Ukrainian Government and its representatives.

He said that the meeting had created not only "friendship across borders", but it had also established a realistic template for future work to create more activities for the better for all veterans.

He also thanked all of the delegates and observers, their wives and everyone involved with the preparation of this meeting including the Secretariat and the Executive Board.

Kjetil Valrygg  
General Rapporteur