

Newsletter SWIRMO day one

SWIRMO has finally started. All of the preparation for the 7th edition of SWIRMO in Cartagena de Indias, Colombia was crowned by the opening ceremony with ICRC Vice President Madam Christine Beerli and the Colombian Minister of Defense Juan Carlos Pinzón, and by the presence of all the heads of the Colombian armed and security forces.

All attending officers acknowledged the effort of a country facing armed violence committing to the respect of law applicable to military and internal security operations.

The political will to respect and ensure respect of these rules was stated by the Minister of Defense and represents a great step towards the applicability of the law, whose repercussion in the field still needs to be consolidated.

The workshop is welcoming 70 participants coming from 55 countries from all five continents. All participants are high-ranking officers in their countries' respective armed forces.

The ICRC is happy to witness this exchange of experience between these high-ranking officers from all over the world, which is a sign that, at the end of the day all these different languages are trying to speak the same message: The respect and applicability of rules governing military operations.

Raoul Forster
SWIRMO Director

Arrival and opening ceremony

Since Friday 4 of October, participants and organizers of SWIRMO started arriving to Cartagena de Indias to attend the workshop. On Sunday a welcome cocktail was offered to participants in which Mr. Raoul Forster SWIRMO Director and Colonel Juan Carlos Gomez from the Colombian Ministry of Defense welcomed the participants.

The opening ceremony started on Monday 7 of October at 9AM during which ICRC's Vice President, Madame Christine Beerli, acknowledged the opportunity for exchange amongst all participants concerning the applicability of the rules concerning military operations and their integration into their training curricula. She said that SWIRMO success could be only attributed to the participants' effort to apply the lessons learned.

The Minister of Defense expressed his gratitude to the ICRC for helping the workshop take place in Colombia. He underlined the fact that this SWIRMO is the first in the

Americas, taking place as a sign of the positive changes his country is pushing and the more than 50 years of dialogue with the ICRC.

The workshop

Day 1

Trainers with a long experience in teaching of International Humanitarian Law and rules governing military operations are in charge of implementing the workshop. Participants have been organized in five different groups according to the language of communication. The groups are distributed as follows:

- Three English language groups whose class leaders are Colonel Kirby Abbott from Canada, Colonel John Joseph Spierin from Ireland and Chris De Cock Lieutenant Colonel from Belgium.
- One Spanish language group, class leader Air Force Colonel Javier Guisández.
- One Russian language group, class leader Mayor General Gia Toradze.

The introductory topics of the workshop addressed the Applicable Law of Armed Conflict and International Human Rights Law with the objective of recalling that all situations in the field of armed conflict must take place within a legal framework and that “out of the law” situations in military operations do not exist.

Tomorrow

The topics to be addressed in the second day of the workshop will deal with “Targeting in armed conflict” and “The Military in Law Enforcement”.