

## **Second Meeting of the Working Group on Regional Security from Above and Below**

August 2010

Buenos Aires, Argentina.

The members of the Working Group on Regional Security from Above and Below met on 16 August 2010 in Buenos Aires, Argentina. The first part of the meeting was the evaluation of the first year of the research project, while the second part was the planning of the second year, which would be focusing on regional security from below. Present in the meeting were Dr. Carolina G. Hernandez (Philippines); Dr. Mely Caballero-Anthony (Singapore), who discussed the Southeast Asia case study; Ms. Marcela Donadio, Mr. Gonzalo Serra and Mr. Patricio Maffei Gaido (Argentina), who discussed the Latin America case study; and Mr. Rodrigo Alvarez (Chile).

The working group, in general, focuses on perspectives, conceptions, discourses, debates, processes, activities, etc. of formal institutionalized intergovernmental organizations (above) and informal, non-institutionalized non-governmental groups (below) in four regions. The main objective is to determine how regional security is viewed by these two sets of security actors in Latin America, South Asia, Southeast Asia, and West Africa in order to find ways by which views regarding regional security by security actors from “below” might be able to provide inputs to and be reflected in security policy making by those from “above”.

In the first part of the meeting, the researchers shared how different processes in their respective regions address security, and how formal and informal practices, networks, and movements link with each other. The presentations gave a broad overview of the kinds of security institutions in the Americas and in Asia, especially in Southeast Asia. Members from the *Red de Seguridad y Defensa de America Latina* (RESDAL) explained the existing regional security institutions and mechanisms, the institutions and agreements in the sub-regions, the relationship of civil society and regional institutions, and examples of trans-border interactions. The focus of the discussion was on the Organization of American States (OAS) and the Inter-American System. On the other hand, Dr. Caballero-Anthony focused on the two distinct security arrangements in Southeast Asia – the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) and the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF). She characterized these institutions as loose and informal and concentrates on confidence-building measures. She emphasized that the reason for this is that unlike in other parts of the world, security is viewed as comprehensive in Southeast Asia. Security is viewed as more than just the defence of the state from military attacks. It acknowledges the importance of economic and political stability in building confidence within the state and building confidence among nations.

In the second part of the meeting, the members discussed the nature of the study to be done for the second year. The second year of work will focus on voices from below in regional security policy making. Aside from continuing to promote South-South discourses on security, the aim for the second year is to contribute to GCST’s goal of opening spaces for new voices, which is also currently being done through the GCST Small Grants Initiative. At the same time, the working group’s objectives that will be addressed in the second year of the project are (1) to find ways by which links between formal and informal forms of regional security cooperation, particularly views and voices from “below” that have impacts on regional security cooperation

and activities of groups seeking solutions to insecurity outside of formal frameworks might be established and institutionalized in regional security policy making; (2) to look at how human security can be grounded within regional security frameworks in a manner that would promote security and peace at the grassroots level; and (3) to develop and promote innovative conceptualizations of linking regional security with human security that would advance the research agenda on security and peace as well as provide policy makers with an innovative regional security focus to promote security and peace for all.

The project and the outcomes of the working group were also discussed and disseminated in the public fora held on 17 August 2010 at the *Escuela de Defensa Nacional* in Buenos Aires, Argentina and on 20 August 2010 at the *Pontifícia Universidade Católica do Rio de Janeiro* (PUC-Rio) in Brazil. The larger dissemination of the outcomes of the working group, which would include the Latin America, South Asia, Southeast Asia and West Africa case studies, would be done in the upcoming GCST Colloquium.