Excellency,

I am writing to you in my capacity as Coordinator for Cooperation and assistance and Requests for assistance pursuant to Article 7 of CCW Protocol V on Explosive Remnants of War and with a view, in particular, to the consideration of these issues at the 2011 Meeting of Experts of the High Contracting Parties to Protocol V (Geneva, 6 to 8 April 2011).

I wish, in the first place, to underline the importance of national reporting in ensuring that the Meeting of Experts has an adequate amount of accurate information before it to allow a thorough and informed consideration of the issues, and to recall, in this context, that the deadline for the submission of annual reports is 31 March. I encourage your authorities to pay particular attention to forms E and F of the reporting format, which relate respectively to Articles 7 and 8 of the Protocol. It is worth pointing out, in particular, that form E is relevant not only to States affected by ERW, but also to High Contracting Parties which have provided assistance to such States. This point, which featured in discussions during meetings in 2010, was reinforced by the decision of the Fourth Conference of the High Contracting Parties in November 2010 “To encourage High Contracting Parties to include detailed information in reporting forms E and F, as relevant, on cooperation and assistance provided, as well as received” (emphasis added). The “Guide to National Reporting under CCW Protocol V”, adopted by the Fourth Conference, may be of assistance when completing national reports.
I would also take this opportunity to recall that, at the time of writing, three States have submitted requests for assistance pursuant to Article 7. These requests are available on the Protocol V website (www.unog.ch/ccw/ProtocolIV) under the heading “ERW database”. All three States provided updates on their situations in the course of the 2010 meetings under Protocol V, and it is clear that substantial needs remain.

It is also clear that significant needs for assistance exist in ERW-affected States which have not submitted formal requests for assistance. In addition to the option of submitting a formal request, other possibilities exist for such States to bring their needs to the attention of other High Contracting Parties, such as by providing details in their national reports or at the Meetings of Experts. Many ERW-affected States have availed of such opportunities.

The provision of assistance is an important means of operationalising the relevant provisions of the Protocol. In this regard, it is worth recalling the decision of the Fourth Conference of the High Contracting Parties “to encourage High Contracting Parties, relevant international organizations and institutions which might be in a position to do so, to consider providing assistance in response to requests submitted under Article 7 of the Protocol, or in response to needs identified in other ways, including during the Meetings of Experts”. I hope that, at next month’s Meeting of Experts, we will hear about actions taken by High Contracting Parties or others in accordance with the above decision of the Fourth Conference.

In conclusion, I invite all High Contracting Parties which have either provided or received assistance with regard to Explosive Remnants of War to consider providing information at the Meeting of Experts on their experiences, both positive and negative. Such exchange of information can be of considerable benefit for the future work on implementation of the Protocol, both at the national level and internationally.

Should you require further information on this issue, please do not hesitate to contact me or the CCW Implementation Support Unit.

Yours sincerely,

James C. O'Shea

Coordinator on Cooperation and assistance
and on Requests for assistance pursuant to Article 7