Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons (CCW)

Protocol V on Explosive Remnants of War

Meeting of Experts of the High Contracting Parties of Protocol V

1st July 2019

Excellency,

It is my great honor to serve as the President-designate of the Thirteenth Annual Conference of the High Contracting Parties to Protocol V and it is my pleasure to inform you about the outline of the upcoming Meeting of Experts of the High Contracting Parties of Protocol V taking place on 23rd August 2019.

As presented in the informal consultations to the High Contracting Parties and States on 14th June 2019, we will focus on three thematic areas:

1) Clearance of explosive remnants of war in urban contexts, 2) Article 4 on Recording, retaining and transmission of information and 3) Article 8 on co-operation and assistance focusing particularly on victim assistance.

Each of the thematic sessions will begin with an expert panel, which will then be followed by an open discussion. High Contracting Parties and States are encouraged to actively engage in the discussion with the assistance of the guiding questions presented in this letter.

In the beginning of our expert meeting, the Geneva Branch of the United Nations Office for Disarmament Affairs (UNODA) will provide an update on national annual reporting by High Contracting Parties. Additionally, the President-Designate will provide an update on the universalization efforts. We welcome interventions from High Contracting Parties and States also to these discussions.

**Thematic Session 1: Clearance of explosive remnants of war in urban contexts**

In the Meeting of Experts of the High Contracting Parties, we will begin our discussions with an expert panel, which will address challenges related to ERW clearance in urban contexts. The panel experts will elaborate on the challenges related to clearance in urban environments both in contexts where the respective conflict has ended a while ago, as well as in more contemporary contexts where conflict and tensions are still part of civilians’ everyday life.
Guiding questions:

1) What are the particular challenges for clearance when ERW covered by the Protocol have been used in urban areas?

2) How are you prioritizing areas requiring clearance in urban context?

3) How have you adjusted your ERW clearing operations during and after conflict in order to protect civilians in contaminated areas?

4) What effects of these adjustment measures did you observe?

5) What are the steps that you have taken to reduce the prevalence of explosive remnants of war?

Thematic Session 2 on Article 4: Recording, retaining and transmission of information

Article 4 of Protocol V is not only a legal obligation, but also a prerequisite for accurately understanding the scale and nature of contamination in order to design appropriate responses, especially at a time when we are facing new types of contamination.

National authorities as well as operators in charge of survey and clearance operations need thus to be equipped with effective information management tools that have been designed based on a proper understanding of stakeholder requirements.

The objective of the discussion is to focus on data collection as well as information management and sharing and to highlight good practices in this field.

Guiding questions:

1) Could you give some concrete examples if and how you have been delivering information on the abandonment of explosive ordnance after the cessation of active hostilities to parties controlling the affected areas?

2) How do your authorities facilitate the rapid marking and clearance, removal or destruction of explosive remnants of war in the contaminated area?

3) Could you give some examples of how are you informing civilian populations about the danger posed by ERW in affected territory?

Thematic Session 3: Article 8: Co-operation and assistance Victim assistance

Finally, in line with paragraph 32 of the 2018 final report, we will address the issues of cooperation and victim assistance focusing, but not limiting the discussion, particularly on Victim Assistance. We aim to build upon on the previous work done to promote the Plan of Action on Victim Assistance from 2008, and look forward to deepen the discussion in how to implement more effectively the existing Plan of Action.

Guiding questions:

1) How do you educate civilian population about the risks of ERWs?
2) How does the presence of ERW affect health care provision to and the rehabilitation of victims of ERW? 

3) How have you organized the emergency first aid to the victims of the ERWs? 

4) What kind of long-term support do you provide to victims after ERW accidents either in your country or in another country through co-operation and assistance?

Finally, I would like to encourage all delegations to think of ways to further strengthen the work of this important Protocol. We particularly encourage High Contracting Parties affected by ERWs to share their views.

In case you have any questions, do not hesitate to contact my team or me. In light of the limited time available to us, we would most appreciate if delegations could inform us in advance of their intentions to have presentations during the meeting. I look forward to your continued cooperation and commitment.

Please accept Excellency, the assurance of my highest consideration.

Sincerely,

[Signature]

Terhi Hakala
Ambassador
Permanent Representative of Finland

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