Protocol V Meeting of Experts
Statement by Ireland on Article 4 – 08 April 2015

My/Madam Coordinator

After the entry into force of CCW Protocol V, Ireland developed a system of recording and retention of information on the use of explosive ordnance in order to ensure compliance with Article 4. This system was designed to enable Ireland to meet its obligations to record, retain and to be prepared to transmit information on the use of explosive ordnance or abandoned explosive ordnance. These efforts have focused on practical training of military personnel in the recording and transfer of all relevant information relating to explosive ordnance. From the outset it was decided that this would be achieved by incorporating PV recording procedures into all Defence Forces live-fire training activities which involved the usage of explosive ordnance.

We have already conducted two presentations on this system to meetings of experts in 2011 and 2012.

The recording procedures are applicable to land, sea and air elements of the Defence Forces and have been in place since 1 January 2011. The present procedures require that reports are compiled by the personnel at the firing point and that this detailed information is then transferred through the normal chain of command through the formation headquarters and onwards to the Joint Operations Centre at Defence Forces Head Quarters. This process is designed to ensure that the necessary information will be available for further transmission in accordance with Article 4 of CCW Protocol V, in the context of any future armed conflict.

In order to extract the key data associated with each occasion of the use of explosive ordnance, a spreadsheet was developed. This document prompts the user with preregistered information, specific to the Irish Defence Forces relating to all weapon systems and ammunition and fuze types currently in service. In determining what information was required for entry to the spreadsheet it was decided to approach the problem of unexploded ordnance from the point of view of the challenges posed by the post-conflict clearance of ERW. These details include weapon type, munition type, fuse type, locations of all firing points, intended targets in range and direction, variations in fall of shot, observations on impacts from the user and the number of rounds used whilst engaging each target location.

The first phase of this project involved disseminating information to all levels of the organisation on our obligations under CCW Protocol V and details of the use of the recording system. This necessitated an information campaign in order to communicate the reasons for this additional activity by the end user and also specific instructions on how to complete the document correctly.

This process involved both initial briefings for all units and formations and the inclusion of lectures into all Defence Forces career courses to ensure that personnel at all relevant levels of command and staff appointments had an understanding of the recording process.

A major challenge in implementing these measures was communicating effectively with the large number of officers and non commissioned officers who are routinely
involved in field training and in the use of explosive ordnance. It was necessary to ensure that there were a sufficient number of personnel within each unit who were familiar with the Protocol V obligations and then to develop a pool of personnel with the practical experience of completing the Recording Spreadsheet correctly. An added difficulty was the high turnover of staff within military units, as personnel rotate through different appointments.

This challenge was overcome by supplementary briefings and an additional information campaign. The process has lasted for a four year period and is still continuing. Improvements have been made to the spread sheet to address issues which were identified after the system went live in order to make it more user friendly and to reduce the incidence of errors. The spread sheet was also adjusted to facilitate input of all forms of GPS and other map data, which may be encountered in the numerous overseas environments to which the Defence Forces operate.

Currently, returns are required by all Defence Forces units both in Ireland and overseas when explosive ordnance is used, whether on operations or in training. This information is transmitted through the operations chain of command as previously mentioned. This is the chain of reporting which would be utilised in the event of a live report during armed conflict. As a result, all operations personnel at the various stages of command are familiar with, and are routinely practised in, processing of such returns.

Now that the system is operational the major current challenge is to maintain the appropriate level of familiarity and training, at all levels within the Defence Forces. In particular it is essential to educate each new wave of young officers and non commissioned officers into the practise of recording the use of explosive ordnance. In Ireland's case the greatest challenge in establishing the recording process, has been in effecting the necessary change of culture at unit level. This change in culture must be sufficient to ensure the creation of a pool of experienced personnel capable of ensuring continuity. This change in culture can be achieved but may take several iterations of an information and training campaign to entrench these practices across the organisation.

Thank You, Mr/Madam Coodinator