Eleventh Conference of High Contracting Parties to Protocol V on Explosive Remnants of War, 20 November 2017

Review of the status and operation of the Protocol: Implementation of Article IV

Statement of Australia

Mr President

Thank you again for your initiative to convene this panel on development and implementation of Article 4 procedures. We thank also the States Parties who have participated as panellists, and those who have already spoken from the floor, for sharing their practices. Australia is pleased to join in sharing information about our own practices.

In accordance with Article IV, the Australian Defence Force tracks and records every use of explosive ordnance, regardless of whether the provisions of Protocol V are applicable as a matter of law.

Operational Orders are issued to ensure that detailed electronic reports, including Explosive Ordnance Disposal databases, are maintained by all relevant commands. Australian military forces in the field are required to populate the database with information that is then submitted to Australian Defence Force command headquarters in the theatre of operations, and then back to Australia.

The Australian Defence Force operational level headquarters in Australia is required to maintain a comprehensive register that includes reporting of explosive remnants of war incidents. This register includes, where possible, the nature, type, quantity and condition of the unexploded ordnance or the abandoned explosive ordnance; any actions taken to mark, clear, remove and/or destroy these items; their location; and an assessment of the threat posed. The register also aims to provide detailed information about: reporting steps taken; any future action required to deal with the items; and
any warnings issued or risk education provided to military forces or the local community.

These registers are used to determine the requirements for protective equipment, risk education, and what information about explosive remnants of war is provided to visitors entering Australian Defence Force areas of operations.

Mr President

All practicable precautions are taken to protect the civilian population, individual civilians and civilian objects from the risks and effects of explosive remnants of war in those areas in which the Australian Defence Forces is operating. This is standard Australian Defence Force operational procedure, irrespective of whether the particular area of operations is under the control of the Australian Defence Force. Warnings, cordonning, evacuation and other safeguards as required are implemented prior to any recovery or destruction of explosive remnants of war.

For example, warnings, cordonning and evacuations occurred prior to the detonation of unexploded ordnance during the Australian Defence Force regional assistance operation, Operation Render Safe, which was deployed to the Solomon Islands in 2016.

Risk education is, as a matter of course, conducted by the Australian Defence Force to warn local civilians of the dangers of explosive remnants of war. Civilians are provided with advice about how to report the location of items of explosive remnants of war when found.

For example, during the Australian Defence Force regional assistance operation to Solomon Islands in 2016, Operation Render Safe, the Australian Defence Force delivered and supported a risk education program.

Thank you, Mr President.