Cooperation with other fora

Thank you, Fernando. Good afternoon, Excellencies, dear colleagues.

As you may recall, last year the Sixth Conference agreed to exchange, where appropriate, experiences and practices of Protocol V with regard to victim assistance with other relevant international legal instruments. The importance of this recommendation was practically demonstrated by the contributions of affected States during this year’s Meeting of Experts. In this regard, I would like to express my appreciation to Albania, Chile, Colombia, Croatia and Uganda for sharing with us during the Meeting of Experts their experiences with the assistance to victims of mines and explosive remnants of war.

An important point raised during the discussions was that for affected states being party to several international legal instruments with obligations for victim assistance enhances the effective development and implementation victim assistance measures at the national level. Affected states emphasized the common approach to victim assistance that the CCW Prot. V, the Convention on Anti-personnel Landmines and the Convention on Cluster Munitions follow. In the implementation of victim assistance measures, the non-discrimination principle is applied and no distinction in terms of a cause of injury should be made. The availability and access for victims to the services required, including in the area of emergency aid, health care, physical and psychological rehabilitation, social and economic integration, must be ensured. Special services should be provided in accordance with special needs.

When ERW survivors acquire a disability, they fall under the scope of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD). During the Meeting of Experts States parties to the CRPD and the CCW Prot. V were encourage to pay particular attention to the comprehensive human rights treaty that the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities offers to promote and protect the rights of persons with disabilities.

A question was raised during the discussions in April, whether since the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities is in place there may no longer be a need for considering victim assistance under the different conventional weapons treaties. As pointed out by the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights during the meeting of experts, humanitarian disarmament instruments and
human rights instruments, such as Protocol V and CRPD, support each other and the obligations under one instrument do not replace the ones under the other instrument, but reinforce and complement each other. Assisting the victims of ERW is a commitment that all High Contracting Parties have undertaken by joining Protocol V. Irrespective of the CRPD, the obligation under Protocol V must be respected. Finally, a practical matter is that – to date – not all Protocol V High Contracting Parties are party to the CRPD. The OHCHR emphasized that an increased exchange of practices and experiences among these instruments would be welcome as it would be strengthening the implementation of provisions for the protection and promotion of the rights of some of the most vulnerable parts of a society.

Making a difference to the lives of victims is a major challenge and understanding what is happening in other fora and learning from their experiences can only enhance our own efforts under Protocol V. It is for these reasons that we have again proposed that next year there continue to be a focus on sharing experiences with other relevant legal instruments.

Focus on implementation

In the margins of this year’s Meeting of Exerts, Fernando and myself held a small group meeting of interested delegation on how to advance implementation of the victim assistance obligations under Protocol V. Reflecting on this meeting, we have proposed to this Conference that next year’s Meeting of Expert on victim assistance would put a focus on reinforcing effective implementation of the provisions of Art. 8. Such work could involve assessing exactly what affected States and States providing cooperation and assistance have achieved under Protocol V and in particular the Plan of Action on Victim Assistance, considering the challenges that affected States face in their efforts to assist victims and what contribution the High Contracting Parties of the Protocol can make to overcome these problems.

Here, lessons learnt from other fora in practical terms regarding promising approaches to measuring the progress made and promoting the assistance to victims to States and the wider international community, could valuably inform future work.
The Coordinator and the Friend of the Coordinator also pay tribute to the work that the Coordinators on Improvised explosive devices (IEDs) under Amended Protocol II have undertaken on victim assistance and their continued efforts to address the Plan of Action on Victim Assistance as a tool that could also guide the work on victim assistance in the wider realm of the Convention and its Protocols.

I would now like to hand back the floor to my colleague, Fernando.

[Fernando] Thank you very much Caroline. I now open the floor to interventions, comments and questions.

[The floor to be given to those requesting to speak.]

Would any other delegation wish to take the floor? This does not seem to be the case, I would now like to hand back the floor to the President.