Statement on Cooperation and Assistance:

The United States provides a range technical and financial assistance to help states address issues related to explosive remnants of war (ERW). The United States provides assistance for the clearance of ERW, including ERW existing at the time of entry into force of Protocol V, for the destruction of aging and excess munitions, and for the proper maintenance of conventional weapons stockpiles.

The Department of State provides this assistance through the Bureau of Political-Military Affairs Office of Weapons Removal and Abatement’s Conventional Weapons Destruction (CWD) Program. CWD is a comprehensive approach that includes humanitarian mine action, battle area clearance, clearance of explosive remnants of war (ERW), small arms and light weapons destruction (including at-risk munitions and man-portable air defense systems – MANPADS), stockpile and cache reduction, and physical security and stockpile management. Conventional weapons destruction assistance that totaled over $142 million in FY 2011. Fiscal Year 2012 funding is expected to be approximately $149 million.

PM/WRA works in concert with the U.S. Defense Threat Reduction Agency (DTRA), which runs its own Small Arms/Light Weapons Program to assess stockpile maintenance and orient states to best practices on storage and security of weapons and munitions.

To initiate a bilateral assistance program a state seeking assistance must submit a formal request, preferably from the Minister or Deputy Minister level to the United States Embassy, which provides detail on the type of assistance being requested. The request is reviewed by the Bureau of Political-Military Affairs Office of Weapons Removal and Abatement to determine the appropriate response. Any projects are subject to the availability of funds, therefore an assessment visit does not necessarily mean a program will be approved.

In the event of a catastrophic munitions explosion or the cessation of armed conflict, PM/WRA can assess, fund, and potentially execute emergency remediation and post-conflict battle area clearance. Upon formal request from the host government, PM/WRA can dispatch a team to assess the situation, develop an appropriate response, and determine funding requirements. PM/WRA’s standing Quick Reaction Force (QRF) can respond to immediate post-catastrophic explosions or battle area clearance within 48 hours. The QRF was part of the U.S. initial response to request for assistance in Libya in 2011. The QRF was most recently used to respond the March 4, 2012, depot explosions in Brazzaville,
Republic of Congo. Two QRF Explosive Ordnance Disposal (EOD) experts arrived less than 48 hours after the Government of the Republic of Congo’s request for assistance to conduct a post-blast damage assessment to determine the humanitarian impact from Unexploded Ordnance (UXO). Within a few days, additional QRF EOD experts arrived to support the clean-up of UXO in civilian populated areas. The QRF experts coordinated its actions with a UN/GRoC fusion cell that was set-up to manage the clearance operation.

Donor Coordination:

Donor coordination is an essential aspect ensuring that donor assistance reaches the areas where it is most needed. The United States supports donor coordination and was an original member of the Mine Action Support Group, which was established in 1998, and endeavors to coordinate the humanitarian mine action programs of the world’s major donor states, harmonize the prioritization of their respective mine action programs, and increase donor support for mine action where it is most needed. The United States has served as chair of this group several times and greatly appreciates the efforts of the current chair, Australia.

Donor nations have different fiscal years and contribute to CWD on a bilateral basis as well as to multilateral organizations like the EU, UN, ITF and OAS. Because of this, it has been difficult to get a clear picture of where all the funding is going. It is difficult to increase coordination, align priorities and avoid duplication. Efficiently, effectively, and clearly coordinating donor resources remains one of the MASG’s biggest challenges.

Given the complexities of donor coordination the United States does not limit its activities to the MASG, but makes every effort for each of the states for which financial assistance is provided to understand what other donors are contributing in order to better understand funding gaps and priorities for our own assistance. This is often facilitated by the UN or other international organization and most importantly the national authorities of the recipient state, as previously noted related to our assistance to the Republic of Congo.