Brief on Clearance and Article 4
Coordinator on Clearance and Article 4, Ms. Diana Kazina
Wednesday 8 April 2015, 3:00pm

Excellencies, ladies and gentlemen,

Welcome to the session on clearance and Article 4. I am delighted to lead these areas of Protocol V’s work and to follow in the footsteps of my predecessor, Mr. Ivan Grinevich of Belarus.

In accordance with the decisions taken at the Eighth Conference, our tasks for this afternoon are to:

- Continue to work on clearance, removal and destruction of ERW and capacity building in these areas;
- Encourage High Contracting Parties to provide updates on their ongoing implementation of Article 3;
- Pursue the exchange of information on the most difficult clearance operations;
- Continue to exchange information on the implementation of Article 4; and
- Consider possible measures to improve existing mechanisms for the transmission of information under Article 4, including how to further improve the quality of this information.

I propose to split our session into two parts. First, we will consider the issues arising under Article 3 and in the second part of this session, we will focus on Article 4.

Therefore turning to Article 3, the clearance of ERW remains the most intense area of work under Protocol V. Article 3 is a landmark provision of international humanitarian law as it requires parties to an armed conflict to contribute to the clearance of ERW. It also sets out detailed provisions on how to conduct the tasks of surveillance, clearance and destruction of ERW.

This afternoon affected States are encouraged to speak on their ongoing efforts to fulfil the obligations of Article 3, including responding to the questions in the Programme of Work, which were:

- Who is the national authority responsible for ERW in your country?
- What progress has been made on surveying and assessing the threat posed by ERW?
- What progress has been made on the clearance and destruction of ERW?
- What efforts have been undertaken to build capacity at the community and national levels in the surveillance, clearance and destruction of ERW?

An issue that arose last year was the clearance of particularly challenging areas and these included sand dessert areas, which was referred to by Kuwait, and areas where intensive battles took place. This last clearance challenge was raised by Belarus and Ukraine. On these two matters, I encourage delegations to share their experiences and lessons learnt from such clearance operations.
I now open the floor and as first the list to further explain the importance of sharing experiences on the clearance of sand desert areas and sites of intensive battles is my predecessor, Mr. Ivan Grinevich. Ivan – you have the floor.

[Mr. Grinevich to speak.]

Also on my list is a new comer to Protocol V and a country who I wish to extend a warm welcome to and that is Greece. Greece – you have the floor.

[Delegation of Greece to speak.]

[Coordinator to proceed through the list of speakers.]

We now come to the second part of the session which addresses Article 4. As delegations will be aware, Article 4 requires parties to an armed conflict to record, retain and transmit information on the use or abandonment of explosive ordnance without delay after the cessation of active hostilities.

I invite delegations to share their experiences on implementing Article 4 procedures, including how such procedures have been incorporated in the training of armed forces.

Two issues were raised in the decisions taken during the Eighth Conference. The first is improving the quality of information transferred under Article 4. Last year UNMAS provided the example of where the transferred information was incomplete concerning strikes on all targets and such information is invaluable for clearance operations. Therefore, I encourage delegations to speak on whether and how they are improving the quality of information recorded and transferred under Article 4.

The second issue regards the possibility of establishing a transfer mechanism for Article 4 information. At the end of a conflict, there can be much confusion and unnecessary delays before clearance organisations receive information on the location and type of explosive ordnance used. I appreciate that prior to engaging in a conflict, States may have already agreed to transfer Article 4 information to clearance organisations that they know will be operating in an affected territory. But what about the situation where it is not possible to work with your preferred clearance organisation? In such a situation would it be preferable to have one recognised focal point or third party for transferring Article 4 information? Alternatively, would it be possible to have one focal point for receiving details on how Article 4 information has been transferred? The CCW Implementation Support Unit has fulfilled this role in the past and this allows them to reassure parties, international organisations and NGOs that States are fulfilling their obligations under Protocol V.

With this lengthy introduction, I now open the floor. First on my list is [the Coordinator to proceed through the list of speakers.]

I am grateful to the delegations that shared their national experiences and provided input on issues that are critical to the implementation of Articles 3 and 4.