Meeting of Experts of the High Contracting Parties to the Protocol on Explosive Remnants of War (Protocol V) of the Convention on Prohibitions or Restrictions on the Use of Certain Conventional Weapons Which May be Deemed to be Excessively Injurious or to Have Indiscriminate Effects

Geneva, 23 August 2019

Statement by Germany

Madam President-designate,

Germany wishes to thank you for chairing the Meeting of Experts of the High Contracting Parties to the Protocol on Explosive Remnants of War and assures you of our full cooperation in your work.

Germany aligns itself with the statement of the European Union.

Let me start by underlining that Germany - on a voluntary basis - provides substantial bilateral assistance to affected states, both High Contracting Parties and non-High Contracting Parties to Protocol V. Germany supports the clearance of explosive remnants of war – regardless of their type and their origin –, risk education programmes for the civilian population and the care and rehabilitation and social and economic reintegration of victims of explosive remnants of war, as well as advocacy for international conventions. In 2018 Germany allocated 36 million EUR for this purpose. In addition to Germany’s bilateral assistance, financial contributions are
made through the United Nations, the European Union, the OSCE and other relevant international organisations.

Last year, 12 countries and territories benefitted from Germany’s bilateral financial and technical assistance for clearance programmes. These measures helped eradicate the daily threat that unexploded and abandoned ordnance pose to populations in need for humanitarian assistance and development. Furthermore, they also threaten humanitarian aid workers, operating in the field to help them.

Unplanned explosions at ammunition storage sites underline both the possible physical dangers emanating from remnants of war and the necessity of quick action to minimize their long-term developmental impact. We support the clearance of the resulting contamination through our partner organizations and contributions to the relevant NATO-trust fund.

Those incidents are also the reason why Germany attaches great importance to generic preventive measures aimed at minimising the occurrence of explosive remnants of war as set out in the Technical Annex of Protocol V. With regard to the production, procurement and use of explosive ordnance, the highest possible standards of reliability, serviceability and safety design requirements are to be met.

While handling and storage of explosive ordnance are in general regulated by national policies and procedures, Germany fully supports the UN SaferGuard guide to International Ammunition Technical Guidelines (IATG). In this regard, Germany also commends the work of the IATG Technical Review Board in regularly further developing this excellent frame of reference based on a common language, and sound explosive science for national authorities to improve safety, security and efficiency in conventional ammunition stockpile management.
In partnership with International Organizations and NGOs Germany continues to provide considerable financial and staff support to PSSM programmes in many parts of the world. As part of our continued commitment in this area, Germany is leading an ambitious programme in conjunction with the African Union to enhance coordination of PSSM activities across the Sahel region in the context of the AU’s silencing the guns initiative. In addition, we support a number of discrete programmes that enhance the safety of ammunition storage facilities across Northern Africa and the Balkans.

On her land territory including internal waters, Germany itself is affected by existing explosive remnants of war as defined in Article 2 clause 5 of this Protocol. In dealing with this legacy from World War II, Germany takes its own necessary, effective and immediate measures of clearance, removal, destruction and precaution.

Let me briefly highlight that the work in New York on ammunition is progressing. After almost two years of consultations – both in New York and regionally – the GGE in 2020 takes shape. The key substantive issues that have been identified so far are the duality of safety and security concerns, the need for enhanced focus on the latter and the lack of a dedicated international framework to address relevant matters of ammunition. Germany is hoping that the GGE will come up with proposals to tackle these challenges. The GGE will as well affect the work of Protocol V as it could potentially reduce ERW.

Madam President-designate, we look forward to a fruitful exchange in support of effective implementation of Protocol V and we would like to express our special thanks to you for introducing the new operational format at today's meeting, which will certainly lead to constructive discussions.