

Thirteenth Conference of the High Contracting Parties to Protocol V on Explosive Remnants of War to 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

7 October 2019

Original: English

Geneva, 11 November 2019

Item 10 of the provisional agenda

Consideration of matters pertaining to national implementation of the Protocol,
including national reporting or updating on an annual basis

Report on the 2019 Meeting of Experts of the High Contracting Parties to Protocol V

Submitted by the President-designate*¹

I. Introduction

1. The Meeting of Experts of the High Contracting Parties to Protocol V on Explosive Remnants of War to the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons (CCW) took place in Geneva on 23 August 2019.
2. In accordance with the decisions taken at the Twelfth Annual Conferences of High Contracting Parties to Protocol V², the Meeting of Experts focused its discussions on universalization, national reporting, clearance of explosive remnants of war, article 4 of Protocol V on “Recording, retaining and transmission of information” and cooperation and assistance, focusing on victim assistance. The President-designate of the Thirteenth Annual Conference of the High Contracting Parties to Protocol V had informed High Contracting Parties to Protocol V on 1 July 2019 on the outline of the 2019 Meeting of Experts, including guiding questions.

II. Conduct of the meeting (Geneva, 23 August 2019)

A. Universalization

3. As per paragraph 35 of the Final document³ of the Twelfth Conference of the High Contracting Parties to Protocol V, the Conference had decided that the Meeting of Experts should consider the universalization of Protocol V under the overall responsibility of the President-designate of the Thirteenth Conference.
4. The President-designate of the Thirteenth Annual Conference of the High Contracting Parties to Protocol V reminded that out of 125 High Contracting Parties to the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons, 95 High Contracting Parties have consented to be bound

* This document was scheduled for publication after the standard publication date owing to circumstances beyond the submitter's control.

¹ H.E. Ambassador Terhi Hakala of Finland

² CCW/P.V/CONF/2018/5

³ CCW/P.V/CONF/2018/5



by Protocol V. The President-designate stressed that given that Protocol V is the first multilateral agreement to deal with the problem of unexploded and abandoned ordnance, the wide adherence and full implementation of Protocol V by States could significantly reduce the number of civilians killed and injured by explosive remnants of war during and after conflicts as well as mitigate the long-term socio-economic consequences of explosive remnants of war.

5. The President-designate informed that in order to increase awareness and promote universalization of this live-saving Protocol, she had reached out to the 30 High Contracting Parties not party to Protocol V by means of a letter, dated 7 May 2019, in order to seek an update on their intentions to potentially join Protocol V.

6. The President-designate also informed that she had invited the 30 High Contracting Parties not party to Protocol V to participate at an informal universalization event on 22 August 2019 in order to discuss in further detail the content of Protocol V and its obligations. The unofficial universalization event, which was convened at the prerogative of the President-designate, was attended by seven High Contracting Parties and the discussion focused on questions related to the requirements to join Protocol V as well as High Contracting Parties' positions to potentially adhere to the Protocol V in the near-, medium- or long-term.

B. National reporting

7. As per paragraph 30 of the Final document⁴ of the Twelfth Annual Conference of the High Contracting Parties to Protocol V, the Conference had decided that, under the overall responsibility of the President-designate, High Contracting Parties are to continue with their efforts to encourage a higher rate of national reporting, including but not limited to the implementation of the measures⁵ adopted at the Eleventh Annual Conference.

8. National annual reporting is a legal obligation for the High Contracting Parties to Protocol V in accordance with Article 10 Paragraph 2 (b) of the Protocol. Article 8 (5) of Protocol V on the provision of information to the relevant UN databases on mine action established within the United Nations system, provide the scope and content of the national annual reports. Furthermore, the Guide to National Reporting under CCW Protocol V,⁶ decided upon in the Final document⁷ of the Fourth Conference, gives a checklist of questions to be answered under the national report. As outlined in this "Guide to National Reporting under CCW Protocol V," the High Contracting Parties are requested to provide annual reports containing information on articles 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9 and 11 of Protocol V.

9. National annual reporting under CCW Protocol V is not only an essential mechanism for confidence-building and transparency among High Contracting Parties, but it is also an important tool in the monitoring and evaluation of the general status and overall implementation of the Protocol V.

10. The Geneva Branch of the United Nations Office for Disarmament Affairs (UNODA) informed that at the time of the Meeting of Experts, 50 national annual reports had been received.

C. Clearance of explosive remnants of war

11. In accordance with the decisions⁸ of the Fifth Review Conference of the High Contracting Parties to the Convention, a panel discussion, chaired by a representative of the Irish Defence Forces, initiated the discussions on clearance of explosive weapons. Specific

⁴ CCW/P.V/CONF/2018/5

⁵ CCW/P.V/2017/5, paragraph 27

⁶ CCW/P.V/CONF/2009/4/Add.1, dated 26 October 2009, and
CCW/P.V/CONF/2009/4/Add.1/Corr.1, dated 4 November 2009

⁷ CCW/P.V/CONF/2010/11

⁸ CCW/CONF.V/10

emphasis was put on clearance in urban contexts. The panel consisted of representatives from Bosnia and Herzegovina, Finland and the United Nations Mine Action Service. The representatives of Bosnia and Herzegovina and Finland both presented national insights on their systems and capabilities put in place to clear explosive remnants of war stemming from previous conflicts as well as specific challenges encountered. The representative of the United Nations Mine Action Service informed that the clearance of explosive remnants of war is usually embedded in cooperation with other humanitarian actors in three phases, namely emergency response, early recovery and recovery. The need for close communication among all involved actors, as well as contingency planning and the necessity of adequate and flexible funding were stressed as enablers for efficient clearance operations.

12. After the panel discussions, delegations were encouraged to respond to the following set of questions during their interventions:

- (i) What are the particular challenges for clearance when explosive remnants of war covered by the Protocol have been used in urban areas?
- (ii) How are you prioritizing areas requiring clearance in urban context?
- (iii) How have you adjusted your explosive remnants of war clearing operations during and after conflict in order to protect civilians in contaminated areas?
- (iv) What effects of these adjustment measures did you observe?
- (v) What are the steps that you have taken to reduce the prevalence of explosive remnants of war?

13. In the discussion following the panel discussion, High Contracting Parties shared national experiences on clearance of explosive remnants of war in urban settings. High Contracting Parties highlighted the severe consequences for the population of the disruption of services caused by explosive remnants of war in urban environments. It was stressed that urban contamination through explosive remnants of war constitutes not only a physical threat to civilians but also slows down post-conflict reconstruction and impacts negatively the long-term socio-economic development of concerned states. Delegations highlighted the difficulties in prioritizing areas for clearance in urban settings by balancing the protection of civilians and the reestablishment of essential infrastructure and services. High Contracting Parties also provided updates on clearance assistance they are providing.

D. Article 4 on “Recording, retaining and transmission of information”

14. In line with the paragraph 27 of the Final document⁹ of the Twelfth Annual Conference of the High Contracting Parties to Protocol V, a panel discussion initiated the discussions on Article 4 of the Protocol on “Recording, retaining and transmission of information”. Particular focus was put on data collection and information management and good practices applied in these domains. The panel was chaired by a representative of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Finland. A representative from the Geneva International Centre for Humanitarian Demining presented on the Information Management System for Mine Action, focusing on how this tool can support States in addressing their respective challenges when it comes to data collection. A representative of the Directorate of Mine Action Coordination of Afghanistan shared its national experience in data collection and information management and highlighted the importance of information sharing between relevant authorities to enable efficient clearance.

15. After the panel discussion, delegations were encouraged to respond in their interventions to the following set of questions:

- (i) Could you give some concrete examples if and how you have been delivering information on the abandonment of explosive ordnance after the cessation of active hostilities to parties controlling the affected areas?

⁹ CCW/P.V/CONF/2018/5

(ii) How do your authorities facilitate the rapid marking and clearance, removal or destruction of explosive remnants of war in the contaminated area?

(iii) Could you give some examples of how are you informing civilian populations about the danger posed by explosive remnants of war in affected territory?

16. Discussions after the panel discussions evolved around the interlinkages between information management and programming. It was stressed that a high level of integration between information management operators and programme managers is essential. It was further noted that information management tools are currently being developed and the importance of continuous dialogue among relevant stakeholders was stressed. High Contracting Parties also shared information on national practices with regard to the sharing of information on contamination by explosive remnants of war.

E. Article 8 on Co-operation and assistance

17. In accordance with paragraph 32 of the Final document¹⁰ of the Twelfth Annual Conference of the High Contracting Parties to Protocol V, High Contracting Parties agreed to continue focusing on cooperation and assistance, focusing on victim assistance.

18. The discussion on victim assistance was started with a panel discussion, chaired by a representative of the United Nations Mine Action Service. A representative from Belgium reminded that High Contracting Parties had made victim assistance a central pillar of Protocol V. The representative highlighted several elements which are crucial to victim assistance, such as the provision of first aid and emergency care and improving access to services for victims. Also, the importance of the mapping of national needs, the elaboration of national action plans and the collection of data with regard to victim assistance at the national level was stressed. The representative of Belgium also emphasized the necessity of effective cooperation at national and international levels, given the complexity and long-term horizon of victim assistance. Also, the potential benefits of increasing cooperation on victim assistance across various disarmament instruments, the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and the donor community were highlighted. A representative of Ministry of Health and Environment of Iraq shared national insights on assistance provided to victims of explosive remnants of war, and also mentioned that they are in the process of developing a national plan on victim assistance. The representative highlighted that insufficient funding and lacking training and equipment were major impediments to the provision of victim assistance. Also, the need for capacity development to train technical experts, in particular also with regard to medical devices and prosthetics was stressed.

19. After the panel discussion, delegations were encouraged to respond in their interventions to the following set of questions:

(i) How do you educate the civilian population about the risks of explosive remnants of war?

(ii) How does the presence of explosive remnants of war affect the provision of health care to and the rehabilitation of victims of explosive remnants of war?

(iii) How have you organized the emergency first aid to the victims of explosive remnants of war?

(iv) What kind of long-term support do you provide to victims after explosive remnants of war accidents either in your country or in another country through co-operation and assistance?

20. In the discussion ensuing the panellists' presentations, High Contracting Parties reiterated the paramount importance of victim assistance. High Contracting Parties also welcomed that a specific session had been dedicated to victim assistance during the Meeting of Experts. Several High Contracting Parties provided updates on efforts undertaken to implement Article 8 (2) of the Protocol on providing assistance to victims of explosive remnants of war. The discussion also explored some areas of commonalities in the context

¹⁰ CCW/P.V/CONF/2018/5

of victim assistance with other relevant disarmament bodies and welcomed this approach to address some of the challenges related to providing victim assistance support.
