



United Nations Inter-Agency Coordination Group on Mine Action

Thirteenth Conference of High Contracting Parties

to Protocol V on Explosive Remnants of War

Statement under General Exchange of Views

Monday, 11 November 2019

Madam President,¹

On behalf of the United Nations Inter-Agency Coordination Group on Mine Action comprising the United Nations entities involved in mine action,² allow me to congratulate you on your election and assure you of our delegations' full support and cooperation during this meeting.

Excellencies,

According to data collected by the United Nations in 2018, explosive remnants of war (ERW) caused 41 percent of explosive ordnance casualties.³ This

¹ H.E. Terhi Hakala, Ambassador and Permanent Representative of Finland to the United Nations Office at Geneva, President-designate of the Thirteenth Conference of High Contracting Parties to Protocol V on Explosive Remnants of War.

² The United Nations Departments and Offices of the Secretariat, specialized agencies, funds and programmes are: the United Nations Mine Action Service of the Department of Peace Operations, the Office for Disarmament Affairs, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women), the United Nations Office for Project Services (UNOPS), the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), the World Food Programme (WFP) and the World Health Organization (WHO). The United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research (UNIDIR) and the World Bank are observers.

³ Report of the Secretary General, Assistance in Mine Action, 6 August 2019, UN Doc. A/74/288, para. 5.



alone underlines the importance of Protocol V and the pressing need for its effective implementation to significantly reduce the civilian harm caused by ERW contamination.

ERW and other explosives device contamination, in particular in urban settings, pose many challenges for **clearance operations**. These are often buried beneath collapsed buildings or in piles of rubble, rendering clearance a high risk, complex, three-dimensional operation. Equally risky and complex, in contexts of protracted conflict and intense fighting, clearance operations are increasingly frequently carried out while sporadic hostilities continue, further increasing the dangers faced by clearance personnel.

This is why **information sharing and management** are so critical to the success of such difficult operations. Knowing the type and specification of unexploded ordnance greatly increases the speed and efficiency of clearance, as well as the safety of explosive ordnance disposal personnel.

The United Nations urges High Contracting Parties to implement, fully and in a timely manner, their legal obligations under Protocol V.

High Contracting Parties must share accurate and reliable information to contribute to better prioritization of tasks, reduction of risks of civilians, humanitarian personnel and deminers as well as to the establishment and fulfilment of realistic outcomes.



Excellencies,

As we celebrate the thirtieth anniversary of the adoption of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, it is distressing that children make up over 80 percent of ERW casualties, and one third of casualties, overall. In most contexts, **risk education** is the only form of protection against explosive threats that civilians receive. Between 2014 and 2018, the United Nations Mine Action Service (UNMAS) delivered risk education to more than 12 million people. In 2018 alone, UNICEF reached four million boys and girls with mine and ERW risk education in twenty countries, the majority in Yemen, Syria, Ukraine and Iraq.

As part of its Mine Action Strategy 2019-2023 and the overarching goal to ‘leave no one behind’, the United Nations continues to enhance its engagement in **Victim Assistance**. We strengthen the support provided to survivors, family members and communities affected by explosive ordnance so as to ensure their equal access to health and education and full participation in social and economic life.

In this regard, we reiterate our support to the valuable work conducted by the Meeting of Experts of Protocol V on the obligation of High Contracting Parties under **Article 8 paragraph 2** to provide assistance to victims of ERW.

We call on all High Contracting Parties to implement and fund the Plan of Action on Victim Assistance, adopted in 2008, and to support the building of national capacities. Better understanding and responding to the needs of victims



must be considered a priority by High Contracting Parties, whether at national or international level.

States in a position to assist together with affected states, the United Nations, and civil society organizations must cooperate more closely and more efficiently to make services available, accessible, affordable and of good quality for all persons who have suffered physical or psychological injury, economic loss, social marginalization or substantial impairment of their rights caused by the use of ERW.

The **universalization** of Protocol V and its effective implementation, along with strict compliance with International Humanitarian Law, remain critical to alleviate and prevent the human suffering caused by ERW.

The United Nations calls on States who have not yet joined the CCW and its Protocol V to do so.

Thank you.