



## United Nations Inter-Agency Coordination Group on Mine Action

### 10<sup>th</sup> Conference of High Contracting Parties to CCW **Protocol V** on Explosive Remnants of War

#### Statement on General Exchange of Views

Geneva, 29 August 2016

*Delivered by Mr. Bruno Donat, Chief, Geneva office, UNMAS*

Mr. President<sup>1</sup>,

The following statement is delivered on behalf of the Inter-Agency Coordination Group on Mine Action (IACG-MA), comprising the United Nations entities<sup>2</sup> involved in mine action.

As armed conflicts proliferate and their intensity increases, so will the threat posed by unexploded ordnance and abandoned explosive ordnance. UNMAS, in June 2015, established a new programme in Iraq to assess the scale of newly identified explosive threats. And it did similarly in response to the crisis in Syria, in August 2015. In South Sudan, as the escalation of conflict results in further contamination by Explosive Remnants of War (ERW), UNMAS has also been intensifying its response.

In early 2016, at the request of the Government of Ukraine, the United Nations conducted a joint mission to assess the nature and impact of ERW and landmine contamination in areas affected by the recent conflict. The experts from UNMAS, UNDP and UNICEF confirmed that unexploded ordnance and landmines are negatively impacting civilians living in conflict-affected areas, and blocking humanitarian response and recovery efforts.

In Yemen, all governorates are contaminated by ERW. With UNICEF support, the Yemen Executive Mine Action Center (YEMAC) and the Ministry of Education continue to screen schools affected by the ongoing conflict to ensure that they are free of ERW and mines. Under YEMAC leadership and through partnership with other line ministries and NGOs, risk education activities are expanding. During the first half of 2016, more than 827,000 people, mostly children, received life-saving information.

Examples like these remind us of the importance of Protocol V as a key instrument of international humanitarian law in reducing suffering and the negative socio-economic impact of ERW. The United Nations takes this opportunity to call upon High Contracting Parties and those in a position to do so, to strengthen their contribution to clearance operations of ERW worldwide, including through international cooperation and assistance.

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<sup>2</sup> The Department of Peacekeeping Operations (DPKO) / United Nations Mine Action Service (UNMAS) (Chair), Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), UN Office for Disarmament Affairs (UNODA), Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), UN Development Programme (UNDP), Office of the High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), UN Children's Fund (UNICEF), UN Office for Project Services (UNOPS), UN Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women), World Food Programme (WFP), World Health Organization (WHO), United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research (UNIDIR) (Observer), and the World Bank (Observer).



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Mr. President,

Today, the United Nations would like to highlight three key matters in relation to Protocol V.

First, the United Nations is concerned by the slow pace of ratification and accession to Protocol V over the last years. With only 91 High Contracting Parties, less than 50% of Member States are party to the Protocol. Non-State Parties, particularly those affected by and exposed to ERW, are encouraged to join Protocol V at the earliest possible opportunity. At the same time, the United Nations congratulates Bahrain, Côte d'Ivoire, Lesotho and Montenegro for expressing their consent to be bound by Protocol V, and commends them for their contribution to the universalization of this important instrument.

Second, timely and effective implementation of Article 4 regarding the “recording, retaining and transmission of information” on used or abandoned explosive ordnance remains critical. The increase in the quality and accuracy of the information provided would significantly improve the efficacy of United Nations interventions. The United Nations therefore supports the proposal to hold a practical workshop on Article 4, as recommended by the President in his “Report on Taking Stock of Progress on the Implementation of Protocol V – National Reporting, Clearance and Article 4”.

Third, the safe and secure management of ammunition continues to be relevant under Protocol V with regard to the Generic Preventive Measures. The United Nations wishes to express appreciation to the President and to the Coordinator for convening a session on this matter during the Meetings of Experts. The United Nations, particularly through the members of the IACG-MA, has significant expertise in assisting in this domain, as was also highlighted in other treaty fora, such as during the Second Conference of States Parties to the Arms Trade Treaty.

Last but not least, the United Nations is pleased to communicate that its Policy on Victim Assistance in Mine Action has been recently updated, which pertains to both direct and indirect victims of ERW incidents.

Thank you.