



United Nations Inter-Agency Coordination Group on Mine Action

Eighth Conference of High Contracting Parties to Protocol V on Explosive Remnants of War to the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons

Protocol V: Statement under General Exchange of Views

Monday, 10 November 2014

Delivered by Ms. Agnès Marcaillou, Director, United Nations Mine Action Service (UNMAS)

The following statement is delivered on behalf of the Inter-Agency Coordination Group on Mine Action¹ (IACG-MA), comprising 14 United Nations entities involved in mine action.

Madam President,

On behalf of the IACG-MA, I would like to congratulate you on your election as President of the Eighth Conference of the High Contracting Parties to Protocol V of the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons. I would like to assure you of the United Nations' strong support throughout your presidency.

Explosive Remnants of War (ERW) continue to claim lives during and after conflict, taking a heavy toll on civilians and, among them, disproportionately affecting children. The last twelve months have seen the use of explosive ordnance in many settings, leaving behind the deadly legacy of ERW. Afghanistan, Iraq, Palestine, Syria, and Ukraine are but a few examples of massive use of explosive ordnance. In Iraq and Syria, we can all recognize already the developmental impact of ERW on their populations and infrastructure. In Gaza, the United Nations estimates that approximately 72,000 explosive items were used during the recent hostilities. Based on an assumed 10% failure rate, an estimated 7,000 explosive remnants of war may be posing a major threat to boys, girls, women and men in Gaza.

On 23 July, the Secretary-General of the United Nations directed UNMAS "to immediately develop and implement an effective security plan for the safe and secure

¹ The Department of Peacekeeping Operations (DPKO) / United Nations Mine Action Service (UNMAS), UN Office of Disarmament Affairs (UNODA), Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), UN Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN Women), UN Children's Fund (UNICEF), UN Development Programme (UNDP), Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), UN Office for Project Services (UNOPS), Office of the High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), World Food Programme (WFP), World Health Organization (WHO), United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research (UNIDIR) (Observer status), and the World Bank (Observer status).

handling of any weapons discovered in UN premises” and “to immediately deploy personnel with expertise to deal with this situation.” Four days later, on 27 July, UNMAS deployed and was actively responding to the humanitarian crisis.² While UNMAS’ deployment to Gaza was directed by the Secretary-General, requests to survey and clear ERW, through UNRWA, are further legitimized through Protocol V as it provides a legal framework to operationalize our life saving activities in conflict-affected environments.

Madam President,

Let me draw your attention to four specific articles under this Protocol.

First, for Article 5 of Protocol V, on Other precautions for the protection of the civilian population, individual civilians and civilian objects from the risks and effects of ERW, United Nations entities often work in tandem to contribute to meeting this important obligation. UNICEF and UNMAS directly support risk education programmes that protect civilians from explosive remnants of war in many countries, including through the reinforcement of incident monitoring systems³. In Gaza, for example, UNMAS and UNICEF are supporting each other to carry out a comprehensive emergency risk education campaign; about one million people have been reached by text and radio messages; over 3,000 teachers received a manual for ERW risk education; and, those involved in rubble removal and reconstruction in Gaza also benefited from UN risk education campaigns carried out by UNICEF, UNMAS and UNRWA. In Ukraine, close to 26,000⁴ new ERW have been reportedly identified and removed by the State Emergency Service. Thanks to UNICEF, some 600,000 children and their families living in affected areas received emergency ERW risk education.

Second, Cooperation and Assistance is of utmost importance to allow Member States to fulfil their obligations under this Protocol, especially in support of Article 3 on clearance, removal and destruction of ERW. For instance, together with UNDP, UNICEF and national authorities, UNMAS is currently coordinating activities to prepare and launch the online Portfolio of Mine Action for 2015. The Portfolio is highly praised by Member States, affected and donor countries alike. It compiles information on country or territory specific landmine/ERW contamination, and provides an overview of the global extent of contamination and funding requirements, representing thus an important coordination tool for current and future assistance. As some have already said: responses need to match needs by affected States, and the United Nations is committed to supporting coordination of assistance

² UNMAS responded by surveying and clearing over 180 sites including all affected schools, the Rafah crossing with Egypt, the Gaza power plant and critically important humanitarian facilities. Over 300 items (of approximately 40 tons) were inspected, and 16 aircraft bombs defused at the request of UNRWA. UNMAS delivered risk education to 4,000 people including civilians in at-risk areas, United Nations staff, humanitarian workers, internally displaced people, UNRWA teachers, engineers and construction workers. The UNMAS intervention enabled children to return to school in an environment free from ERW and humanitarian workers to resume emergency assistance programming.

³ UNICEF supports the monitoring of ERW incidents and the development of Knowledge, Attitude and Practice household surveys to improve national ERW protection strategies.

⁴ 25,850 as of 29 October 2014 (Source: State Emergency Service)

provided by States in a position to do so.

Third, Protocol V is not exclusive to post-conflict remedy. Article 9 on Generic Preventive Measures encourages Parties to minimize the occurrence of ERW. As the Coordinator said in his report,⁵ “The management of munitions sites is highly relevant to Protocol V and its objective of preventing humanitarian harm from explosive remnants of war.”

The United Nations considers that applying international standards and best practices to stockpile management significantly contributes to the prevention of accidental explosions of weapons and ammunition depots as well as the diversion of weapons from legal to illicit markets. The United Nations continues to encourage the application of and compliance with the International Ammunition Technical Guidelines (IATG), as a sound framework to dispose of stockpiles in the safest possible manner. In addition, UNDP and UNMAS are providing technical support to strengthen national authorities towards implementing projects on weapons and ammunition management in countries such as Bosnia and Herzegovina, Côte d’Ivoire, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Georgia, Mali, Mozambique and South Sudan.

In addition, the United Nations continues to consider that Article 4 of Protocol V, on Recording, retaining and transmission of information, is indeed key to reducing deaths and injuries caused by ERW as well as the destruction of infrastructure.

Madam President, distinguished delegates,

The United Nations welcomes the recommendations by High Contracting Parties on victim assistance, proposing to increase cooperation with other relevant treaties, and to discuss applying the Protocol V Plan of Action on Victim Assistance to all protocols of CCW. And, I would like to reiterate the commitment of UNMAS to coordinate the United Nations’ work on Victim Assistance.

Lastly, on behalf of the United Nations Inter-Agency Coordination Group on Mine Action, I would like to congratulate the Governments of Greece and Iraq for joining Protocol V. The United Nations encourages High Contracting Parties in a position to do so to address ERW contamination, in accordance with Articles 7 and 8 of Protocol V. The United Nations urges those engaged in the use of explosive ordnance in Iraq to fully comply with their obligations under Protocol V, in particular with Article 4.

In closing, Madam President, the United Nations will continue to advocate for the universalization of Protocol 5 and High Contracting Parties’ compliance with their legal obligations.

Thank you.

⁵ Coordinator on Generic Preventive Measures (Mr. Jim Burke, Colonel, of Ireland) (2014), Report on Generic Preventive Measures, (CCW/P.V/CONF/2014/5).

