
Sixteenth 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

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

Report on the 2022 Meeting of Experts of the High Contracting Parties to Protocol V

Submitted by the Coordinators¹

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 22 July 2022.
2. In accordance with the decisions taken at the Fifteenth Annual Conference of High Contracting Parties to Protocol V², the Meeting of Experts focused its discussions on universalization; national reporting; Article 4 of the Protocol on “recording, retaining and transmission of information and generic preventative measures”; clearance of explosive remnants of war (ERW) and technical assistance and victim assistance. Prior to the meeting, the President-designate of the Sixteenth Annual Conference of the High Contracting Parties to Protocol V had informed High Contracting Parties to Protocol V of the outline of the 2022 Meeting of Experts, including guiding questions.

II. Conduct of the meeting (Geneva, 22 July 2022)

A. Universalization

3. The President-designate of the Sixteenth Annual Conference of the High Contracting Parties to Protocol V welcomed the Philippines as the 97th High Contracting Parties to Protocol V.
4. Considering this new accession, the President-designate stated that out of 125 High Contracting Parties to the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons, 97 High Contracting Parties had now consented to be bound by Protocol V. Twenty-eight High Contracting Parties to the CCW remain non-High Contracting Parties to Protocol V. The President-designate stressed that wide adherence to, and full implementation of Protocol V, the first multilateral agreement to address the challenges of unexploded and abandoned

¹ Mr. Muhammad Omar of Pakistan on Clearance and Technical Assistance and Mr. Andreas Bilgeri of Austria on Victim Assistance. The decision to nominate a Coordinator on Clearance and Technical Assistance and one on Victim Assistance was taken by the Thirteenth Conference of the High Contracting Parties to Protocol V (CCW/P.V/CONF/2019/5).

² CCW/P.V/CONF/2021/5.



ordnance, could significantly reduce the number of civilians killed and injured during and after conflicts. It could also mitigate the long-term socio-economic consequences of explosive remnants of war. The President-designate explained the outreach efforts undertaken to improve the universalization of the Protocol, underlining that, so far, 18 States which have not joined the Protocol yet have been approached, and that more meetings are planned in the months leading up to the Sixteenth Annual Conference. It was notably highlighted that a couple of countries have a ratification procedure underway.

B. National reporting

5. As per paragraph 28 of its final document, the Fifteenth Annual Conference of the High Contracting Parties to Protocol V decided that 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 measures adopted at the Eleventh Annual Conference.³ High Contracting Parties were also encouraged to consider measures to improve reporting methodology.

6. 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 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”,⁴ decided upon in the Final document of the Fourth Conference⁵, provides a checklist of questions to be answered under the national report. As outlined in this guide, 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.

7. 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.

8. The Implementation Support Unit (ISU) of the CCW informed that at the time of the Meeting of Experts, 47 national annual reports had been received covering the period of 1 January-31 December 2021 and shared a presentation on submission trends of national annual reports. In this presentation, it was notably pointed out that on average, each year, 55% of High Contracting Parties submitted a national annual report since the adoption of the Protocol in 2005. Furthermore, 25% of High Contracting Parties never submitted a national annual report, and 15% submitted between 1 and 5 national annual reports. The ISU of the CCW reiterated its readiness to support High Contracting Parties in drafting and submitting reports.

9. The President-designate informed High Contracting Parties that he intends to reach out to all High Contracting Parties which irregularly or rarely submit national annual reports, to assist in identifying issues, and possible solutions.

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

10. As per paragraph 26 of its final document, the Fifteenth Annual Conference of the High Contracting Parties to Protocol V decided that High Contracting Parties should, on a voluntary basis and subject to national policies on the protection of sensitive information, continue to share national best practices on the implementation of Article 4 and generic preventive measures.

11. Two experts made presentations focusing on how the management of deposits of explosives and ammunitions contributes to the implementation of article 4 of the CCW

³ CCW/P.V/2017/5, paragraph 27

⁴ CCW/P.V/CONF/2009/4/Add.1

⁵ CCW/P.V/CONF/2010/11

Protocol V. The panellist from the Ammunition Management Advisory Team of Geneva International Centre for Humanitarian Demining (AMAT-GICHD) underlined that by developing an effective stockpile inventory system, States have precise information on stocks and used ammunition And therefore information on potential ERW. The representative from the Spanish Unit of Verification (UVE) presented the national Spanish procedures implemented to record ammunitions possessed and used by the military. The speaker in particular highlighted the necessity for States to adopt a similar approach and similar policies to have a coherent global strategy to deal with ERW.

12. After the presentations, delegations were encouraged to respond to the following set of questions in their interventions:

- i. Are there any national best practices you can share with regard to the recording, retaining, and transmission of information on remaining explosive ordnance after the cessation of active hostilities to parties controlling the affected areas?
- ii. Are there measures which have proved to be most effective?

13. The discussion touched upon information exchanges on the daily threat that unexploded, abandoned, or unsafely or insecurely stored explosive ordnance pose to populations in need of humanitarian assistance and development. Several delegations enquired about the first steps States can take to improve the management of their national ammunitions stockpiles, in response to which experts referred to the International Ammunition Technical Guidelines (IATG), especially its first level. High Contracting Parties also elaborated on having put in place operating procedures enabling ammunition data to be recorded to facilitate the destruction or neutralization of unexploded ordnance after an armed conflict.

D. Clearance of explosive remnants of war and Technical Assistance

14. In accordance with paragraph 32 of its final document, the Fifteenth Annual Conference of the High Contracting Parties to Protocol V decided that the Meeting of Experts should exchange information on a voluntary basis on methods of clearance of ERW.

15. The Coordinator on Clearance and Technical Assistance made a presentation in which he stressed the ongoing relevance of ERW contamination, their long-lasting impact on civilians, and, consequently, the need to clear land to protect them. Furthermore, he stressed the need for investments destined to find new ways to clear contaminated areas as innovation and technological progress continue to provide important tools which can improve methods in clearance of ERW. He encouraged High Contracting Parties to continue exchanging information on clearance of ERW, and to respond to requests of technical assistance sometimes formulated in national annual reports.

16. A representative from the United Nations Mine Action Service (UNMAS) was invited to share current trends on clearance of ERW with High Contracting Parties. The panellist stressed that currently in this area the key challenges are: (i) the constant evolution of the nature of the threat; (ii) the increased use of ordnance in urban environments which damages critical infrastructure; and (iii) the decrease of available funding. In addition emerging technologies (such as drones, or next generation detectors) were pointed out as possible tools to exponentially improve the work of demining teams, notably by helping to detect ERW in urban settings.

17. After the panel discussion, delegations were encouraged to respond to the following set of questions:

- i. For States which are affected, what are the steps that you have taken to reduce the prevalence of ERW?
- ii. What are the key challenges being experienced in clearance operations? Any specific measures adopted to facilitate clearance in urban context?
- iii. What new technologies are available to assist with the clearance of ERW? Does your country invest in specific projects in this area?

18. Delegations highlighted various impacts, challenges and consequences of ERW, in various environments, in particular on civilians in urban areas and also with respect to rehabilitation in affected areas. Various delegations also stressed that detecting ERW in such contexts remains the main difficulty, and that they rely on, among other aspects, shared best practices – including the ones shared within the CCW Protocol V – to improve their procedures. Some participants also briefed on technical assistance provided to affected States, such as education and training projects implemented through various channels.

E. Victim Assistance

19. The Fifteenth Conference of the High Contracting Parties to Protocol V decided that the Meeting of Experts should give particular focus to the exchange of information and experiences on the implementation of the commitments on victim assistance at the national and community levels; to updates on the latest approaches and innovations in the field of victim assistance; and to exchanges of practical experiences and lessons learned with other relevant legal instruments and fora.⁶

20. The Coordinator on Victim Assistance highlighted that victim assistance has over the years become a priority of the international community and is now also being addressed in the main instruments of IHL. Stressing that the funding of victim assistance programs must be a priority for High Contracting Parties, and that it will have to continue long after affected States will have cleared most of the ERW on their respective territories the Coordinator noted that while ERW clearance programs could have a definitive conclusion one day, victim assistance will be an ongoing process requiring long-term engagement. Victim assistance was further noted as one of the policies which could help ERW-affected-countries to fulfil the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and thus the objectives set in Agenda 2030.

21. A representative from the ASEAN Regional Mine Action Center (ASEAN-ARMAC) made a presentation focusing on victim assistance activities led by his organization, created after the ASEAN Leaders Declaration of 2016. The objectives of ARMAC include to promote the establishment of a victim assistance network in the region, to encourage the sharing of experiences, and to assist member States in developing adapted and efficient policies in this area.

22. After the presentation by the expert, delegations were encouraged to respond to the following set of questions:

- i. What kind of long-term support do you provide to victims after ERW accidents, either in your country or in another country through co-operation and assistance?
- ii. How do you ensure full participation of victims in society and how are victim assistance policies integrated into broader national policies?
- iii. In terms of risk education, what are the main needs identified on the ground?
- iv. What obstacles do you encounter in the provision of health care to and the rehabilitation of victims of ERW? How did COVID-19 impact the assistance provided to victims in affected areas?
- v. How are gender and diversity dimensions included in your victim assistance programs?

23. Several delegations provided updates on efforts undertaken to implement Article 8 (2) of the Protocol on providing assistance to victims of explosive remnants of war. The importance of cooperation between different disarmament bodies to improve victim assistance efforts was repeatedly stressed, as this was regarded as essential in eliciting behavioural change around explosive hazards.

⁶ CCW/P.V/CONF/2021/5, Paragraph 30.

F. Sustainable development goals and mine action

24. Following an initiative of the President-designate, an expert from GICHD made a presentation on the links between mine action and sustainable development goals (SDGs) in which mine action was underlined as an enabler of socio-economic development and key in playing a transformative role in ERW-affected States. Mine action can thus help States reach the SDGs, and, consequently, the SDGs can help to measure the impact of clearance of ERW.
