
Fifteenth 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 2021 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 18 August 2021.

2. In accordance with the decisions taken at the Thirteenth Annual Conferences 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. The President-designate of the Fifteenth Annual Conference of the High Contracting Parties to Protocol V had informed High Contracting Parties to Protocol V of the outline of the 2021 Meeting of Experts, including guiding questions.

II. Conduct of the meeting (Geneva, 18 August 2021)

A. Universalization

3. The President-designate of the Fifteenth 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, 96 High Contracting Parties had consented to be bound by Protocol V. Twenty-nine 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 ordnance, could significantly reduce

* The present report was submitted after the deadline owing to circumstances beyond the submitter's control.

¹ Mr. Muhammad Omar of Pakistan on Clearance and Technical Assistance and Mr. Christoph Sternat 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/2019/5. The Fourteenth Conference did not take place in view of the extraordinary circumstances of the COVID-19 pandemic.



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.

B. National reporting

4. As per paragraph 32 of its Final document, the Thirteenth 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.

5. 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 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.

6. 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.

7. The Implementation Support Unit (ISU) of the CCW informed that at the time of the Meeting of Experts, 55 national annual reports had been received covering the period of 1 January-31 December 2020.

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

8. As per paragraph 30 of its Final document, the Thirteenth 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. It was requested that these compilations of national best practices be made available on the website of the United Nations Office for Disarmament Affairs (UNODA).

9. Delegations were encouraged to respond in their interventions to the following set of questions:

- 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?

10. 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 High Contracting Parties elaborated having put in place operating procedures enabling ammunition data to be recorded in order to facilitate the destruction or neutralization of unexploded ordnance after an armed conflict. High Contracting Parties also touched upon their involvement in several program-specific assistance to countries facing the danger of explosive remnants of war.

³ CCW/P.V/2017/5, paragraph 27

⁴ CCW/P.V/CONF/2009/4/Add.1

⁵ CCW/P.V/CONF/2010/11

D. Clearance of explosive remnants of war and Technical Assistance

11. In accordance with paragraph 36 (b) of its Final document, the Thirteenth 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.

12. The Coordinator on Clearance and Technical Assistance chaired the panel discussion on the issue. Improvised mines and ERW continue to pose risks to civilians even after the cessation of hostilities, due to their direct impacts and the delays they cause in the delivery of humanitarian aid. A panellist from the Geneva International Centre for Humanitarian Demining (GICHD) stressed the ongoing relevance of ERW contamination and their ability to remain in the environment indefinitely. A further distinction was made between UXO (unexploded ordnance), or items that have failed to explode, and AXO (abandoned exploded ordnance) which have not been used in conflict and are abandoned.

13. The second panellist from Norwegian People's Aid noted the security considerations of information access and information gathering in enabling aiding the clearance processes. The use of simple and effective solutions, such as using camera drones to map out areas both rural and urban, in addition to non-technical surveys (NTS) was stated to be of benefit. Challenges of the clearance process relating to topography, vegetation and metal clearance were highlighted.

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

- i. What are the main challenges you encounter with regard to the clearance of ERW?
- ii. Are there any novelties in terms of technical innovations or new means of clearance to overcome these challenges?
- iii. Are there any lessons learned or best practices that you could share?

15. Several delegations highlighted the severe consequences for the population caused by explosive remnants of war in urban environments. Explosive remnants of war in urban settings constituted a physical threat to civilians, hindered post-conflict reconstruction and impacted negatively the long-term socio-economic development. Participants also reiterated their commitment to ERW clearance and briefed the Meeting on technical assistance provided to date to affected States, such as different education and training projects through different military institutions and police authorities. The use of social media in identifying, recording and transmitting information on contaminated areas has become more prevalent as a point of interest.

E. Victim Assistance

16. The Thirteenth 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

17. The panel discussion was chaired by the Coordinator on Victim Assistance, who highlighted the efforts of South Africa at time of negotiation and adoption of Protocol V, supported by the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) and several non-governmental organizations, with regard to Article 8 on victim assistance. The panellist from the Landmine and Cluster Munitions Monitor, noted that of the victim profiles, children and persons with disabilities have been disproportionately affected by ERWs. The delivery methods for risk education by way of face-to-face group sessions, mass media, school curriculums or surveys were stated to help reach greater numbers of victims both in needs

⁶ CCW/P.V/CONF/2019/5, Paragraph 34.

assessments and services of response. It was concurred by the panellist that services provided to victims should be based on need and not on the type of weapon that caused the injury. Ensuring a “continuum of care”, ranging from first aid after injury and physical rehabilitation to socio-economic integration, being made available to larger continuum of audiences faced with difficulty of access was also emphasized.

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

- i. What preventive actions, e.g. risk education campaigns, are carried out to protect civilians from ERW? Are there any lessons learned and/or best practices you can share? Which measures proved to be most effective?
- ii. Are there any new approaches and/or innovations in the way you are providing victim assistance?

19. 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. Some High Contracting Parties noted the establishment of bilateral databases through national focal points that have helped with victim assistance to the implementation of Protocol V. Calling upon greater needs for interstate exchange, inclusive development towards progress of victim assistance was made. Emphasis was directed towards how social media can contribute to effective information dissemination. Also, the importance of cooperation between different disarmament bodies to improve victim assistance efforts was repeatedly stressed, as this helps elicit behavioural change around explosive hazards.
