
Seventeenth 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 Informal Open Consultations on Protocol V

Submitted by the President of the Seventeenth Annual Conference of High Contracting Parties to Protocol V

I. Introduction

1. The Informal Open Consultations on Protocol V on Explosive Remnants of War to the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons (CCW) took place in Geneva on 8 November 2023.
2. The Informal Open Consultations on Protocol V were held in accordance with the decision taken by the 2022 Meeting of the High Contracting Parties to the Convention.¹
3. Prior to the meeting, the President-designate of the Seventeenth Annual Conference of the High Contracting Parties to Protocol V had informed High Contracting Parties to Protocol V of the outline of the Informal Open Consultations, including guiding questions. The consultations were moderated by the Coordinators.²

II. Conduct of the meeting (Geneva, 8 November 2023)

A. Victim assistance

4. 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 international humanitarian law (IHL) and emphasized that explosive remnants of war (ERW) continue to threaten lives and affect socio-economic conditions long after hostilities ceased. The Coordinator also underlined trends identified in national annual reports submitted this year by High Contracting Parties to Protocol V before proceeding to the panel discussion.
5. The panel on victim assistance was composed of representatives from the World Health Organization (WHO) and the United Nations Mine Action Service (UNMAS), as well as two members of the Permanent Mission of the Lao People's Democratic Republic. Overall,

¹ CCW/MSP/2022/7, paragraph 36.

² Ms. Hannah Abubakar of the Philippines 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).



the four speakers underlined that there is a crucial need for ongoing support and consistent assistance for victims of ERW.

6. The representative of WHO addressed the challenges faced in providing assistance to victims of ERW. These challenges included disruption of support, lack of resources, and continuity of care for victims. The representative provided information on the Minimum technical standards and recommendations for rehabilitation that had been developed by WHO to guide health personnel in responding to diverse types of emergencies and introduced the WHO Rehabilitation 2030 initiative, which aims at improving the service in the rehabilitation phase by developing international minimum standards on this matter.

7. The representative of UNMAS briefed on the organization's current projects related to victim assistance and the steps taken to integrate victim assistance into its humanitarian response plans, as well as their coordinating assistance efforts at national and global levels. The representative emphasized in particular the importance of collecting data on victim assistance that is disaggregated based on the cause of disability, in order to ensure that the necessary support is provided to those in need.

8. The panellists from the Permanent Mission of the Lao People's Democratic Republic gave an overview of victim assistance projects currently being carried out at a national level which provide support to victims through medical treatment, psychological and physical rehabilitation, vocational training and employment opportunities. The representatives also highlighted the multistakeholder approach taken by the projects, which were based on collaboration among intergovernmental organizations and non-governmental organizations of the relevant sectors.

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

- i. What kind of long-term support do you provide to victims after explosive remnants of war (ERW) accidents either in your country or in another country through cooperation and assistance?
- ii. What obstacles do you encounter in the provision of victim assistance, including obstacles in health care?
- iii. How do you ensure the full participation of victims in society, particularly women and girls and ethnic minorities? How are gender and diversity dimensions included in your victim assistance programs?
- iv. What risk education activities has your country undertaken? Has your country identified areas of risk education where further work is necessary?
- v. How do you ensure that affected individuals and communities are meaningfully involved in victim assistance planning, implementation, monitoring and evaluation?
- vi. How do you ensure that your national measures on victim assistance respect an integrated approach?

10. Several delegations provided updates on the implementation of Article 8 (2) of the Protocol in providing assistance to victims of explosive remnants of war. Delegations further reiterated the urgent need for States to collect disaggregated data, in particular on gender and types of disability with a view to improve victim assistance operations and stressed the centrality of holistic victim assistance, including also psychosocial support. Some speakers also highlighted the importance of synergies on victim assistance among different treaties, including the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD), the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention (APMBC) and the Convention on Cluster Munitions (CCM) to improve victim assistance efforts.

B. Clearance of explosive remnants of war and Technical Assistance

11. The Coordinator on Clearance and Technical Assistance delivered a presentation in which she stressed the ongoing relevance of ERW contamination, their long-lasting impact

on civilians, and the need to prioritize the clearance of areas posing specific risks to civilians where access to humanitarian assistance may be impeded. Furthermore, she stressed the need for investments to find new ways to clear contaminated areas through innovation and technological progress and noted the many examples of such technological developments from the national annual reports submitted by the High Contracting Parties to Protocol V. She noted the contribution to demining efforts made by High Contracting Parties not affected by ERW through the provision of training on explosive devices and ERW and encouraged High Contracting Parties to continue collaborating, including by providing financial support and qualified experts to affected countries, with a view to decreasing the risks posed by ERW.

12. A representative from the Norwegian People's Aid (NPA) shared information about the organization's work on ERW clearance and removal in African countries. The panellist highlighted that the work of the NPA involves many areas of mine action and disarmament, including clearance and capacity development. He noted that the organization has to date assisted with the clearing of over 1 billion square metres of land and removed over 2 million landmines and other explosive devices in 45 countries. The panellist also provided examples of the demining work carried out in Mozambique, Botswana, Angola, Zimbabwe and Zambia.

13. The representative of the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) briefed the meeting about novel technologies in the field of ERW surveying and clearance. The panellist introduced the operational challenges and opportunities, including the conditions needed for the successful use of technology in the field, such as its complete development and testing, the competency of manufacturers, affordability and continued funding. To exemplify this work, he introduced a new technology developed in collaboration with Waseda Polytechnic University in Japan, which uses artificial intelligence and machine learning to increase the rate of probability detection and decrease false alarm rates during demining operations.

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

- i. For States that are affected, can you share good practices for the effective clearance of ERW?
 - How do you adapt these practices to densely populated areas or in the presence of non-State armed groups?
 - How do you incorporate the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and the protection of biodiversity and the environment in the clearance process?
- ii. How do you take into account the specific consequences of ERW on women and children in your policies? Do your policies give an active role to women in the clearance process?
- iii. Which challenge do you face during the clearance process, and how do you overcome them? Are there any tools or new technologies – such as drones or artificial intelligence – that improve the clearance of ERW?

15. Delegations highlighted the challenges with clearance of ERW, including challenges relating to the quantity of ERW, lack of information regarding their location, how the presence of different types of ERW cause delays to clearance operations, as well as challenges arising from the dynamic nature of the operating environment. Delegations also affirmed their continued commitment to collaborating internationally to support technological developments, risk education and training.