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# 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

14 November 2023

English only

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Geneva, 13 November 2023

Agenda item 8

General exchange of views

## Working paper on how to tackle challenges posed by the use of Explosive Remnants of War

**Submitted by the European Union on behalf of its Member States and the following States: Albania, Georgia, Iceland, Montenegro, North Macedonia, Republic of Moldova and Ukraine**

1. Explosive Remnants of War (ERW) remain a legacy threat from armed conflict, posing a lasting hazard to civilians long after hostilities cease. ERW significantly delays reconstruction efforts and impede socio-economic development. The high number of casualties reported in more than 30 countries, including in Afghanistan, Iraq, Syria, Somalia, Ukraine, and Yemen, is a matter of deep concern. Children, in particular, are vulnerable to the threat of ERW.
2. ERW are not only a legacy from armed conflicts in the past, but land contamination from the ongoing conflicts continue to pose a serious threat to present and future generations. The ongoing conflict in the Middle East will inevitably lead to the further contamination of territories with unexploded ordnance and explosive remnants of war. The EU reiterates the importance to ensure the protection of all civilians at all times in line with International Humanitarian Law.
3. Russia's unjustifiable, unprovoked and illegal war of aggression against Ukraine is of direct relevance to the Protocol V. Russia is using explosive weapons in populated areas, including cluster munitions, to target residential buildings, critical infrastructure, hospitals, and vital power and water supplies, causing unspeakable harm and suffering for civilians. Russia is not respecting the principles and obligations of IHL, including Protocol V, and bears full responsibility for the loss of life, the human suffering and all the indiscriminate destruction it causes in Ukraine.
4. The European Union firmly stands with Ukraine and will continue to provide strong economic, military, social and financial support to Ukraine for as long as it takes, including with respect to the clearance of ERW. This includes specific projects on clearing ERW, anti-personnel mines and cluster munitions as well as on victim assistance and rehabilitation. We encourage all other High Contracting Parties in a position to do so, to follow this example as required by this Protocol as well as the relevant articles of the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention.
5. Protocol V to the CCW on Explosive Remnants of War provides a platform for victim assistance. Where possible, we support seeking synergies in the implementation of Protocol V with other relevant disarmament instruments, such as the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention and Convention on Cluster Munitions, especially on victim assistance, clearance, and survey.
6. The European Union reaffirms its commitments to continue to provide assistance to save lives and to bring tangible benefits for communities in affected areas, creating new



opportunities for growth and stability. The EU contributes towards this through its commitment to mine action, which also addresses ERW. For the EU, victim assistance remains a core component of its mine action assistance. We reaffirm that for victim assistance efforts to be sustainable in the long term, they need to be integrated into broader disability policies. Where needed, we must support States Parties in the integration of victim assistance into their national policies and legal frameworks in a non-discriminatory and gender-sensitive manner.

7. As the world's leading humanitarian donor, the EU and its Member States continue to provide significant funding to mine action, especially in the fields of risk education, clearance, stockpile destruction, and victim assistance. The assistance provided by the EU in 2022 amounted up to 90 million EUR for 20 mine-affected countries, including Armenia, Azerbaijan, Colombia, Libya, Somalia, Ukraine and Yemen. An additional programme of up to 25 million EUR was adopted to support Ukraine's demining of the territories liberated from Russian occupation.

8. The comprehensive framework for safe, secure and sustainable through-life conventional ammunition management can enhance ammunition safety and security and can therefore reduce ERW.

9. Highlighting its relevance to the Protocol V and the CCW, the EU is supporting as a horizontal issue across all Conventions, mainstreaming a gender perspective into all non-proliferation, disarmament and arms control work in line with Resolution 1325 of the UN Security Council, including through promoting women's participation and providing integrated support where appropriate.

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