



EU Statement

Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons (CCW)

17th Annual Conference of Protocol V of the CCW

Geneva, 13th November 2023

Mr. President,

I have the honour to speak on behalf of the European Union.

The candidate countries North Macedonia, Montenegro, Albania and Republic of Moldova¹, the potential candidate country Georgia as well as the EFTA country Iceland, member of the European Economic Area, align themselves with this statement.

I wish to begin by congratulating you, Ambassador Markotić, on assuming the Presidency of this Annual Conference of Protocol V on Explosive Remnants of War. I assure you of the EU's full support and cooperation.

The European Union and its Member States remain fully committed to Protocol V, its objectives and its goal of addressing the problem of unexploded and abandoned explosive ordnance and minimising the serious post-conflict impact of ERW on civilians. We also underline the severe negative consequences that explosive remnants of war can have on the environment. The EU would like to express strong support for all efforts to strengthen this important instrument, to promote its universalisation, and to enhance its implementation in order to eradicate the grave threat posed by unexploded and abandoned ordnance. In this context, we call upon all countries that have not yet done so to join this Protocol.

Mr. President,

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

¹ North Macedonia, Montenegro and Albania continue to be part of the Stabilisation and Association Process.

Afghanistan, Iraq, Syria, Somalia, Ukraine, and Yemen, is a matter of deep concern. Children, in particular, are vulnerable to the threat of ERW.

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.

Russia's unjustifiable, unprovoked and illegal war of aggression against Ukraine is of direct relevance to this Protocol. 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.

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.

Mr. President,

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.

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.

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.

Moreover, the EU attaches the utmost importance to transparency and confidence building in the implementation of Protocol V. We encourage all High Contracting Parties to complete detailed annual reports to promote the work of Protocol V on key issues such as survey, clearance, recording, retention and transmission of information. Timely submission of annual national reports, as well as of updates to them is needed to ensure the effective implementation of Protocol V.

In conclusion, we welcome the comprehensive framework for safe, secure and sustainable through-life conventional ammunition management; as such a framework can enhance ammunition safety and security and can therefore reduce ERW.

The EU is also fully committed to mainstreaming a gender perspective into all non-proliferation, disarmament and arms control work in line with Resolution 1325 of the Security Council of the United Nations, including through promoting women's participation and providing integrated support.

Thank you, Mr. President.