



Statement of the Kingdom of the Netherlands

**concerning Protocol V (Explosive Remnants of War),
Meeting of the High Contracting Parties to the Convention on
Certain Conventional Weapons,**

agenda item 8. General exchange of views

Geneva, 13 November 2023

By

H.E. Robert in den Bosch

**Permanent Representative of the Kingdom of The Netherlands to
the Conference on Disarmament and
Ambassador-at-large for Disarmament Affairs**

Mr. President,

Please allow me to congratulate you, Ambassador Markotić, on your assuming of the Presidency and you let me assure you that you can count on the full support of my delegation. In addition to the statement by the EU, I would like to make the following remarks in my national capacity.

The Netherlands attaches great value to the implementation of Protocol V on Explosive Remnants of War, and its universalization. We strongly encourage all states that have not yet done so to become a party to the CCW and this Protocol.

We appreciate the continued efforts by the Presidency and the ISU, to continue universalization efforts and to facilitate expert assistance under this Protocol. We encourage additional efforts to further the operationalization of expert assistance, including through military-to-military dialogues during the expert meetings. We also urge all HCP to meet their reporting obligations under the Protocol.

Mr. President,

The long-lasting threat of Explosive Remnants of War (ERW) remains of great concern. The strict implementation of this Protocol by all High Contracting Parties is key to ensure that it remains an effective instrument to comprehensively address ERW's.

In this context, we are deeply concerned by the recent reports from the UN's Independent International Commission of Inquiry on Ukraine, as well as reports of the OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights, which provide detailed accounts of IHL violations in Ukraine following Russia's illegal invasion. As the UN reports conclude that the Russian armed forces are responsible for the vast majority of the violations identified, we take this opportunity to call again on Russia to respect its IHL obligations, including those under Protocol V. Furthermore, we demand for the immediate and unconditional withdrawal of all Russian troops and military equipment from the entire territory of Ukraine within its internationally recognized borders.

Considering the humanitarian goals of Protocol V, we would like to stress the responsibility of all belligerents with respect to their duty of clearance, removal or destruction of explosive remnants of war and assist each other in fulfilling this duty after the cessation of active hostilities. The Netherlands remains committed to efficient international cooperation and assistance, and we are committed to support Ukraine with its clearance efforts.

The danger of ERW injuring or killing innocent civilians are perhaps the most concerning when certain types of explosive weapons are used in densely populated areas. We see the worrisome trend that armed conflict worldwide is increasingly

taking place in urbanized areas, as we have witnessed in Ukraine and now also in the current conflict in the Middle East. Therefore, we very much welcome the Political Declaration, led by Ireland, on Strengthening the Protection of Civilians from the Humanitarian Consequences Arising from the Use of Explosive Weapons in Populated Areas (EWIPA). The Netherlands signed this declaration, and we urge other states to do the same.

Thank you.