

**Nineteenth Annual 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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Agenda item 8

General exchanges of views

## **Working Paper**

**Submitted by the European Union and Albania, Georgia, Iceland, Liechtenstein, Montenegro, North Macedonia, Republic of Moldova, and Ukraine \***

### **Explosive Remnants of War (ERW)**

1. The European Union (EU) remains 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 explosive remnants of war (ERW) on civilians. In this regard, the EU would like to express strong support for all efforts to strengthen this important instrument, including through its universalisation, and call upon all countries that have not yet done so to join this Protocol.
2. ERW remain a legacy threat from armed conflict, posing a lasting hazard to civilians long after hostilities cease. ERW significantly delay reconstruction efforts and impede socio-economic development. The high number of casualties reported in more than 30 countries, including in Afghanistan, Iraq, Lebanon, Syria, Somalia, Ukraine, Yemen and in the Gaza Strip, is a matter of deep concern. Children, in particular, are vulnerable to the threat of ERW. We also underline the severe negative consequences that explosive remnants of war have on the environment.
3. Land contamination from ongoing conflicts poses a continuing serious threat for generations. The conflict in the Middle East led 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 (IHL).
4. Russia's unjustified 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, in violation of IHL causing unspeakable harm and suffering for civilians. We call on Russia to respect the principles and obligations of IHL, including Protocol V. Russia bears full responsibility for the loss of life, the human suffering and all the indiscriminate destruction it causes in Ukraine.
5. The European Union firmly stands with Ukraine and reconfirms its unwavering commitment to providing continued robust political, financial, economic, humanitarian, military and diplomatic support to Ukraine and its people, including with respect to the clearance of ERW. This includes specific projects on clearing ERW, anti-personnel mines

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\* The present document is being issued without formal editing.



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 in conjunction with other efforts, including relevant provisions of the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention.

6. The European Union reaffirms its commitments to continue to provide sustained and continuous assistance to save lives and to bring tangible benefits for communities in affected areas, creating new opportunities for growth and stability. As long as explosive remnants of war, included those falling under Amended Protocol II, continue to affect the lives of millions of civilians across the world, the European Union will continue to engage.

7. For the EU, victim assistance remains a core component of mine action. We reaffirm that victim assistance efforts need to be integrated into broader disability policies to be sustainable in the long term. Where needed, we must support States to develop policies to best assist victims and survivors in a non-discriminatory and gender-sensitive manner, addressing the specific needs of all. And 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.

8. The EU continues to provide significant funding to mine action, especially in the fields of risk education, clearance, stockpile destruction, and victim assistance. We have remained major donor to mine action in the world with over 200 million EUR allocated since 2023, including 97 million EUR dedicated to mine clearance.

9. 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.

10. We support the implementation of the Global Framework on Through-Life Conventional Ammunition Management (GFA). We welcome the preparatory meeting held in June this year and look forward to the first Meeting of States of the GFA in 2027. We are convinced that through enhancing ammunition safety and security, GFA can therefore reduce ERW.

11. 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 and related resolutions, including through promoting women's full and equal participation and providing integrated support.

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