# Twentieth 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**

## Meeting of Experts of the High Contracting Parties to Protocol V of the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons – Clearance of Explosive Remnants of War and Technical Assistance*

**Working paper submitted by the Coordinator on Clearance of Explosive Remnants of War and Technical Assistance**

## I. Overview of the work undertaken by the Meeting of Experts on clearance of Explosive Remnants of War and technical assistance from 2022 to 2026

1. The Meeting of Experts has served as a forum for exchanges on emerging challenges, lessons learned, good practices and assistance needs related to the implementation of Protocol V. Drawing on discussions held between 2022 and 2026, the present section provides an overview of the principal themes and recommendations that emerged from its work on the clearance of explosive remnants of war (ERW) and technical assistance, and identifies areas that may merit further consideration.

### A. New technologies in the field of clearance of Explosive Remnants of War

2. Since 2022, discussions within the Meeting of Experts on clearance of ERW and technical assistance have taken place against a backdrop of rapid technological developments. While early exchanges focused primarily on the potential of emerging technologies, discussions increasingly turned to their practical integration into clearance operations. Experts highlighted the importance of investing in and integrating innovative and sustainable technologies, such as artificial intelligence (AI), machine learning, drones, robotics, and remote sensing technologies into processes related to detection, clearance of ERW and land release. Particular emphasis was placed on the role of data as a key enabler of machine learning and AI applications aimed at improving the effectiveness and efficiency of clearance operations.

3. Experts from panels and delegations consistently underscored the importance of research, innovation and capacity-building in support of the deployment of new technologies in clearance of explosive ordnance, including ERW. Good practices shared during the

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Meeting of Experts included the use of robots and thermal-imaging drones to enhance detection capabilities, particularly in high-risk environments, the use of AI and machine learning to increase the rate of probability detection and decrease false alarm rates during clearance operations, and of animal detection systems to complement conventional clearance tools where necessary. Discussions also highlighted the importance of technical assistance, training and knowledge transfer to support the adoption and sustainable use of such technologies by affected States.

4. At the same time, the Meeting of Experts identified a number of challenges associated with the deployment of new technologies. These included the complexity of developing, testing and validating new tools, particularly for detection purposes, as well as financial implications and manufacturing constraints. Experts also highlighted operational limitations linked to certain terrains and climatic conditions, together with the constantly evolving nature of the threat associated with explosive devices. In addition, discussions underscored the importance of effective coordination among diverse actors involved in both the development of new technologies for the clearance of ERW and their use on the ground, including armed forces, civil society actors and private companies. Ethical and governance considerations related to the use of emerging technologies were also identified as areas warranting further attention.

## B. Community-based and context-specific approaches to clearance of Explosive Remnants of War

5. The Meeting of Experts increasingly highlighted the importance of culture-sensitive, community-based and context-specific approaches to clearance of ERW, drawing on practical experiences shared by States and other stakeholders engaged in assistance activities. Discussions reflected a growing recognition that local and community-led initiatives, supported by local ownership and capacity-building mechanisms, are essential to ensuring that efforts related to clearance of ERW are sustainable and responsive to local needs. Experts also underscored the importance of integrating ERW clearance into broader peace, development, humanitarian, and security agendas.

6. In practice, experts highlighted the importance of conflict sensitivity and localization, stressing that effective clearance operations require meaningful engagement with affected communities, as well as a clear understanding of existing local capacities, priorities and needs. Building trust with communities was identified as a prerequisite for successful operations. Discussions also highlighted progress in mainstreaming gender and diversity considerations in mine action programmes. Experts noted that mixed-gender teams facilitate engagement with all members of affected communities and contribute to more effective planning and implementation of clearance activities. Participants further emphasized that technological innovation and the use of new technologies should remain grounded in local realities, support national capacities and remain subject to appropriate human oversight.

7. Experts also identified a number of challenges associated with the implementation of community-based and context-specific approaches to clearance of ERW. These included persistent data gaps that limit the effective mainstreaming of gender and diversity considerations and underscore the need for data disaggregated by sex, age, and disability. Experts also underscored challenges in reaching remote and hard to access communities that are affected by ERW contamination and stressed the importance of ensuring that such communities are not excluded from assistance efforts.

## C. Clearance of Explosive Remnants of War in urban settings

8. The Meeting of Experts highlighted the growing challenges associated with the clearance of ERW in urban settings. Discussions reflected increasing concerns regarding high levels of ERW contamination in cities, towns and surrounding areas, resulting from the use of explosive weapons in populated areas. Experts underscored the significant humanitarian, socio-economic and security implications of these developments, noting their impact on

civilian population, critical infrastructure, the delivery of humanitarian assistance and post-conflict recovery efforts.

9. Experts from panels and delegations highlighted the importance of prioritizing clearance of areas posing the greatest risks to civilians, and areas where ERW contamination may impede access to humanitarian assistance, or essential services. Discussions identified proactive operational planning, capacity building of actors involved, and scenario-based preparedness as important measures for enhancing the effectiveness and safety of clearance operations in urban areas. Experts also stressed the potential contributions of new technologies, including AI, remote-sensing technologies and advanced detection systems, to improving situational awareness, planning and decision-making in complex urban environments with high levels of ERW contamination.

10. At the same time, experts recognized that urban clearance operations present distinct operational challenges. Detection, identification and quantification of ERW contamination remain particularly difficult in densely populated environments, where damaged infrastructure, debris and complex terrain can complicate clearance efforts. Experts acknowledged that addressing contamination in urban settings often requires relying on the use of multiple methods of clearance and specialized capacities, placing significant pressure on financial, material and human resources. Discussions also highlighted that operations in urban areas are particularly difficult due to the presence of civilians, the need to minimize disruption to communities, and possible environmental impacts arising from clearance activities.

## D. Other key takeaways and areas for further consideration by the Meeting of Experts

11. In addition to the issues outlined above, the Meeting of Experts identified a number of overarching lessons relevant to the clearance of ERW and technical assistance more broadly. Discussions underscored the importance of reliable data collection and management to support evidence-based decision-making, improve the targeting of clearance activities and facilitate the monitoring and evaluation of programmes. Experts also emphasized the need for sustained financial, material and human resources, as well as capacity-building and knowledge transfer, to support effective and sustainable clearance efforts. Finally, discussions consistently highlighted the importance of international cooperation and assistance, including through the sharing of expertise, technologies, good practices and resources, in supporting States affected by ERW contamination.

12. Drawing on discussions held since 2022, Experts identified a number of areas for further consideration by the Meeting of Experts, including:

(a) allocation of adequate financial, material and human resources to clearance of ERW, provision of technical assistance and development of sustainable national capacities;

(b) regional and international technical assistance mechanisms, including the sharing of knowledge, good practices and new technologies for clearance of ERW;

(c) opportunities and challenges associated with the use of new technologies for clearance of ERW, including issues related to accessibility, sustainability, ethics, governance and appropriate human oversight;

(d) collection, management and use of disaggregated data to support evidence-based decision-making, prioritization, monitoring and evaluation, as well as community-based and context-specific clearance of ERW and technical assistance;

(e) community-based, context-specific and gender- and diversity-responsive approaches in the planning and implementation of ERW clearance activities; and

(f) operational challenges and good practices associated with the clearance of ERW in urban settings, including operational planning and preparedness, and humanitarian and environmental considerations.

# II. ERW Database

13. The Meeting of Experts under Protocol V was established in 2008 as an open-ended, practice-oriented forum to facilitate voluntary exchanges of information and experience, including on assistance to victims of ERW, as well as technical assistance in the clearance of ERW. More specifically, the First Annual Conference of the High Contracting Parties to Protocol V, held in November 2007, provides that this meeting be established as "*a mechanism for consultation and cooperation (…), on issues such as (…) requests for assistance with the aim to connect needs with resources. The meetings should aim at fostering cooperation and assistance between those requesting assistance in dealing with the problems posed both by existing and future ERW and those in a position to provide assistance*" (CCW/P.V/CONF/2007/1, paragraph 38(e)).

14. The ERW Database was established by the First Conference of the High Contracting Parties to Protocol V (CCW/P.V/CONF/2007/1, paragraph 35) to serve as a mechanism for submitting requests for assistance and their annual updates pursuant to Article 7 (Assistance with respect to existing explosive remnants of war) and Article 8 (Cooperation and Assistance) of the Protocol. Requests can be submitted by High Contracting Parties and Non-High Contracting Parties to Protocol V. It was recommended that requests include information on the scope of ERW-related problems encountered at the national level, as well as corresponding needs' appraisal.

15. Requests for technical assistance under this mechanism were submitted in 2008 and 2009, respectively by Serbia and Ukraine, and Belarus. Reports on the work of the Meeting of Experts from 2009 onwards indicate that the requests for technical assistance submitted by these three States have led to continuous follow up discussions between the requesting States and other States, as well as other stakeholders, ultimately facilitating the provision of technical assistance. These discussions also included updates on the status of the concerned requests and gave an opportunity for potential assistance providers to express their availability.

16. Held within the Meetings of Experts on the basis of requests submitted through the ERW Database, these discussions on technical assistance allowed to foster cooperation and assistance between States seeking assistance to address the challenges posed by ERW and those in a position to provide such assistance. Regular exchanges on assistance requests during the Meetings of Experts also broadened stakeholder engagement and provided a mechanism for maintaining visibility of requests until appropriate resources could be matched with identified needs. Furthermore, the inclusion of such discussions in the reports of the Meetings of Experts submitted annually to the Annual Conferences of Protocol V enhanced the visibility of assistance requirements, helped bring them to the attention of a wider range of potential donors and assistance providers, and thereby increased opportunities for cooperation and support.

17. The last requests for technical assistance under this mechanism were submitted in 2009, suggesting that the database has been underutilized since then. Discussions in recent Meetings of Experts indicate a continued demand for assistance by some States and willingness by other States to provide such assistance if needed. This prompted the Coordinator to initiate discussions on the ERW Database, its utilization, and its practical mechanism of providing a platform to connect needs and resources.

18. In a letter circulated in June 2026, the Coordinator invited High Contracting Parties to Protocol V and other interested stakeholders to share their view on the ERW Database by responding to a set of guiding questions contained in Annex II of this document. High Contracting Parties and other interested stakeholders also had the opportunity to share their views during virtual informal consultations on the ERW Database held on 23 September 2026. Views received through these written submissions and discussions can be summarized as follows:

(a) Concerning the limited use of the ERW Database, responding States raised that this tool appears to suffer from a lack of awareness and the absence of a mechanism to ensure that it remains active and regularly used. It was also underscored that requests for technical assistance are often addressed through other channels, including bilateral arrangements. In

addition, it was noted that the database would benefit from being updated in order to enhance its relevance and usefulness.

(b) Regarding the role of the ERW Database in supporting the implementation of Protocol V, responding States raised that the database, including its structure, should be updated to better match identified needs with available resources, thereby strengthening its role as a tool for facilitating cooperation and assistance. It was underscored that the database could be used to better focus discussions during the Meetings of Experts on specific technical assistance needs, including by possibly making it a standing agenda item, with a view to fostering concrete cooperation projects. In addition, it was noted that the database could provide greater opportunities for international and regional organizations to engage in assistance efforts. In this regard, responding States also suggested that reminders on the possibility to make use of the database and/or update entries already submitted by requesting States be sent by the CCW Implementation Support Unit (ISU) periodically.

(c) When it comes to the possible expansion of the ERW Database, responding States raised the value of including voluntary offers of assistance. It was underscored that this would make the database a more practical tool by facilitating the matching of assistance needs with available support, including for States willing to provide assistance. It was also noted that expanding its scope would better reflect the current challenges related to ERW and provide a clearer overview of the types of assistance available, such as training, technical assistance, clearance, and victim assistance, among others.

(d) On possible steps to revitalize the ERW Database, responding States raised the importance of increasing awareness and accessibility of the database, as well as ensuring the periodic review of the database, including its structure, at Meetings of Experts. It was also underscored that presenting an annual summary report to the Meetings of Experts could encourage its use and support more focused discussions. In addition, it was noted that more practical guidance for the preparation of requests could facilitate the use of the database by High Contracting Parties. More specifically, regarding the current request forms, responding States considered a review of the forms and the information requirements as timely to better reflect today's technical assistance needs and the high levels of contamination by ERW observed in recent years. It was also underscored that the forms should retain a simple and user-friendly format. In addition, it was suggested that a new form could also be explored to allow for the submission of voluntary offers of assistance.

19. During the Meeting of Experts to be held on 9 November 2026, delegations will also be invited to share reflections and views on the ERW Database as a practical mechanism of providing a platform to connect needs and resources for the implementation of Protocol V.

# III. Conclusions and recommendations

20. The overview of the work undertaken by the Meeting of Experts on clearance of ERW and technical assistance from 2022 to 2026, presented in section I of this working paper, highlights the growing focus of discussions on new technologies in the field of clearance of ERW, community-based and context-specific approaches to clearance of ERW and clearance of ERW in urban settings within this forum. In this regard, in its future work, the Meeting of Experts could consider exploring, inter alia, areas listed in paragraph 12.

21. At the same time, discussions over recent years suggest an opportunity to further strengthen the Meeting’s consideration of technical assistance issues. Enhancing exchanges on needs, available support, lessons learned and good practices could help facilitate cooperation among High Contracting Parties and contribute to the effective implementation of Protocol V, including through greater use of existing tools such as the ERW Database.

22. The Coordinator recommends the Twentieth Annual Conference of the High Contracting Parties to Protocol V to consider:

(a) encouraging High Contracting Parties affected by explosive remnants of war to use the ERW Database to request assistance;

(b) requesting the Meeting of Experts to exchange information on technical assistance, including on the basis of requests for assistance submitted under the ERW Database; and

(c) integrating technical assistance, including requests for assistance with the aim to connected needs with resources, to the issues on which the Meeting of Experts is to focus under the responsibility of the Coordinator.

# Annex I

## List of speakers under the panel on clearance of explosive remnants of war and technical assistance from 2022 to 2026

**2026**

- Mr. Clément Meynier, Head of Policy, Mines Advisory Group (MAG).

**2025**

- H.E. Mr. Daovy Vongxay, Ambassador and Permanent Representative of Lao PDR to the United Nations Office and other international organizations in Geneva;
- Mr. Michael Heiman, Head of Mine Action Programmes, Anti-Persoonsmijnen Ontmijnende Product Ontwikkeling (APOPO);
- Mr. Erik Tollefsen, Head of the Weapons Contamination Unit, International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC);
- Ms. Stephanie Golda, Australian Infrastructure Financing Facility for the Pacific (AIFFP); and
- Ms. Radwa Rabie, Advisor on Research and Innovation, Standards and Operations Division, Geneva International Centre for Humanitarian Demining (GICHD).

**2024**

- Mr. Gordon Burns, Counsellor, Australian Delegation to the Conference on Disarmament;
- Dr. Tonya Müller, Swiss Drone and Robotics Centre of the Federal Department of Defence, Civil Protection and Sport (DDPS);
- Mr. Dominic Wolsey, Gender, Diversity, Equality and Inclusion, Geneva International Centre for Humanitarian Demining (GICHD);
- Mr. Jérémy Repond, Francophone Regional Cooperation Programme, Geneva International Centre for Humanitarian Demining (GICHD); and
- Ms. Alessandra Roccasalvo, Resident Representative in Azerbaijan, United Nations Development Programme (UNDP).

**2023 (Informal open consultations)**

- Mr. Miroslav Pisarevic, Programme Manager, Norwegian People's Aid (NPA) Mine Action and Disarmament Programme in Zimbabwe; and
- Mr. Erik Tollefsen, Head of Weapons Contamination Unit, International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC).

**2022**

- Mr. Bruno Donat, Chief of Geneva Office, Global Coordinator of the Mine Action Area of Responsibility of the Global Protection Cluster, United Nations Mine Action System (UNMAS).

When available, copies of speakers' presentations have been made available on UNODA Meetings Place.

# Annex II

## Guiding questions on the ERW Database

1. What are High Contracting Parties' views on the limited use of the ERW database, given that the last requests for technical assistance was in 2009?

2. How could its intended role as a supporting tool for the implementation of Protocol V be better used, including within the framework of the Meetings of Experts and to connect needs with resources, to foster cooperation and assistance, and to support needs-oriented discussions on technical assistance?

3. Would States see value in revitalizing and/or expanding the scope of the ERW database, i.e., to include voluntary offers of assistance? Please explain why.

4. If so, what steps could be taken to revitalize the ERW database and encourage its use by High Contracting Parties?

(a) Would it make for a useful and practical tool for facilitating cooperation and technical assistance under Articles 7 and 8 of Protocol V?

(b) Are the current request forms (Form A – Scope of the ERW-related problems and Form B – Appraisal of needs) and information requirements adequate to reflect today's technical assistance needs related to ERW?