



## **United Nations Inter-Agency Coordination Group on Mine Action**

### **Seventh Conference of High Contracting Parties to Protocol V on Explosive Remnants of War to the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons**

**Geneva, 11-12 November 2013**

#### **Protocol V**

**Delivered by UNMAS on behalf of the IACG-MA**

Mr. President,

Allow me first to congratulate you on behalf of the Inter-Agency Coordination Group for Mine Action (IACG-MA) for your election as President of the Seventh Conference of High Contracting Parties to Protocol V on explosive remnants of war. We would like to assure you of our full and continued support during your presidency.

Protocol V is, together with the APMBC and the Convention on Cluster Munitions, a key legal instrument for the IACG-MA, which includes 12 United Nations departments, agencies, funds and programmes. It represents one of the major multilateral agreements at the foundation of our work.

The United Nations is pleased to see the number of countries acceding to the protocol increase every year and would like to congratulate Kuwait, Zambia and Bangladesh for their accessions since the 6<sup>th</sup> Conference in 2012.

We are nevertheless concerned by recent events. In Mali for instance, UNICEF reported that over the last seven months more than 80 new victims of explosive remnants of war have been registered, half of them children and 11 of which were fatal. In Afghanistan, there has been an alarming increase in the number of civilian casualties from explosive remnants of war (ERW) in and around closed bases and firing ranges of the International Security Assistance Force, with 31 casualties having been reported in the first eight months of this year, compared to only 14 casualties during 2012. These tragic events prove that despite the universalization efforts, ERW continue to claim lives during and after conflict. Therefore, we urge all observer states to join the protocol and high contracting parties to implement fully the obligations of the protocol as soon as possible.

The aim of Articles 3 and 4 of Protocol V are to reduce such tragic death and injury. Article 3 obliges parties to an armed conflict to clear, remove or destroy explosive remnants of war. Article 4 makes provisions to record, and to maintain information on the use of unexploded and abandoned ordnance, and to make available such information to parties in control of the affected area, bilaterally or through a mutually agreed party including, inter alia, the United Nations.

The IACG-MA welcomes the Report by the Coordinator and the Friend of the Coordinator on clearance, removal or destruction of explosive remnants of war and Article 4, which makes some observations on the effective and timely implementation of Article 4. The United Nations joins

others in encouraging affected High Contracting Parties and others to report on progress made and challenges faced in surveying, clearing and destroying ERW, and to further support related capacity building.

Mr. President,

While the reduction of the humanitarian impact of explosive remnants of war is crucial, prevention is not less important.

Curbing the use of explosive weapons in populated areas would be an important step in this direction by limiting the presence of ERW in areas in which there are concentrations of civilians or to which they are expected to return. Beyond this, Protocol V emphasises the crucial importance of generic preventive measures.

The safe and secure management of stockpiles greatly reduces chances of accidental explosions. Unplanned explosions of ammunition sites are a concern in many countries. The United Nations strives to support national authorities in their task to secure ammunition and stockpiles. In the Democratic Republic of Congo for example, UNMAS, in collaboration with the peacekeeping mission MONUSCO, recently handed over a newly built large-scale ammunition depot to the Ministry of Defence. In Côte d'Ivoire, the peacekeeping mission UNOCI not only destroyed unexploded ordnance in Abidjan, but also secured 51 obsolete ammunition storage facilities according to the standards set in the International Ammunition Technical Guidelines (IATG). We would like to take this opportunity to continue encouraging the High Contracting Parties to support the implementation of these guidelines, the IATG.

Though the responsibility for marking, clearing and destroying ERW lies primarily with the state in control of the territory affected by ERW, international cooperation and assistance remain crucial for these activities and could be provided through the United Nations. High Contracting Parties may call for support, including for ERW clearance, and increasingly this leads to clearance and risk reduction taking place. In Mali, for example, UNMAS is providing awareness training to the Malian armed forces, to reduce threats from ERW. Much work remains to be done, however, to ensure that conflict-affected areas are free from threats of explosive ordnance.

Let me now turn to the issue of victim assistance. Article 8 (2), on Cooperation and Assistance, calls upon High Contracting Parties in a position to do so to "provide assistance for the care, rehabilitation and social and economic reintegration of victims of explosive remnants of war".

The IACG-MA welcomes the new reporting template on victim assistance adopted during the Sixth Conference in 2012 and, as stressed by the Secretary-General in his recent report on Assistance in Mine Action, the rights of survivors of explosive remnants of war need to be promoted.

The United Nations takes this opportunity to recall that victim assistance should be gender and age sensitive and efforts should be made to integrate this assistance into broader national disability, health, and other relevant frameworks as expressed in the Strategy of the UN on Mine Action 2013 – 2018 under its strategic objective 2. Also in this context, UNICEF is developing a "child-focused victim assistance programme guidance" to help establish or enhance gender- and age sensitive victim

assistance. The IACG-MA is currently working on updating the UN mine action policy on victim assistance, taking into account the new and stronger normative environment, established by the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, the CRPD.

I thank you.