
Madam President,

I have the honour to speak on behalf of the European Union. The Candidate Countries the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia*, Montenegro*, Serbia* and Albania*, and the country of the Stabilisation and Association Process and potential candidate Bosnia and Herzegovina as well as Ukraine align themselves with this statement.

I would like to thank you for steering this annual meeting and assure you of our full support and cooperation.

The EU and its Member States are fully committed to the objectives of Protocol V which plays a key role in addressing the problem of unexploded and abandoned ordnance and minimising the serious post-conflict impact of Explosive Remnants of War (ERWs) on civilian populations. We strongly support efforts to strengthen this important instrument of International Humanitarian Law and enhance its implementation in order to reduce the humanitarian harm and minimise the risks and effects of ERWs. While welcoming the recent ratifications, we note with concern that the level of adherence to this and other CCW protocols remains relatively low. In this regard, we appreciate your efforts to promote universal adherence to Protocol V and encourage all actors to do the same, as called for by the 11th Conference last year.

As the world's leading donor of humanitarian aid, the EU provides significant assistance for mine action, in particular for the clearance and destruction of mines, booby-traps and ERWs, for victim assistance and for mine risk education in the most heavily affected countries and regions of the world.
In 2017, the EU institutions contracted mine action support amounting to 60 million EUR, including in Chad, Colombia, Croatia, Iraq, Lao PDR, Lebanon, Libya, Myanmar, Syria and Ukraine.

We welcome the ongoing efforts to enhance donor coordination and to enhance ownership by the affected countries and would welcome further cooperation between relevant international instruments to achieve more sustainable and effective mine action. We consider that gender mainstreaming is also an integral part of all humanitarian action.

The EU and its Member States look forward to working together with all High Contracting Parties to further advance the effective implementation of all provisions of Protocol V. We attach great importance to national reporting that will contribute to transparency and building confidence on national implementation. National reporting also facilitates international cooperation and assistance, as it increases our understanding of the progress made and the challenges faced in implementing Protocol V. We therefore call on all High Contracting Parties to fulfil their reporting obligations in a timely and effective manner and look forward to the review in 2021 of the support provided for Protocol V national reporting, coinciding with the Sixth CCW Review Conference.

The key question is how to improve not only the rate, but also the quality of national reporting, which is aided by the expert mechanism to assist High Contracting Parties on a voluntary basis. We welcome the continued efforts of the President to further refine the proposal on national reporting, including providing expert assistance either in the form of one-on-one briefings in Geneva, facilitating contact between the country requiring assistance and experts from other High Contracting Parties or relevant organisations, or in-country visits. We regret that these measures have not yet been implemented in the absence of the Implementation Support Unit (ISU) and we call for their speedy implementation.

We also support further sharing of information and experiences between the High Contracting Parties on the implementation of their obligations under Article 4, including this year’s presentation by Ireland and Sweden on approaches to recording the use of explosive ordnance. Information which is released by armed forces accurately, in a timely manner and in a usable format, as required by Article 4, will have a positive impact on clearance, destruction and removal of ERWs on the ground. We welcome this year’s focus on the clearance of ERWs and victim assistance and encourage the further development and implementation of Article 4 procedures.

Thank you, Madam President

[*] The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Montenegro, Serbia and Albania continue to be part of the Stabilisation and Association Process.

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