Brief on Clearance

Coordinator on Clearance and Article 4, Mr. Ivan Grinevich

Thursday 11 April, 3:00pm, Conference Room XIX

Excellencies, ladies and gentlemen,

Dear colleagues,

I would like to begin by thanking Colonel Gerfried Elias for his leadership on Article 4 and organising what has been a productive session on this issue.

Gerfried has already outlined the recommendations for our areas of work. I would like to remind delegations that we are now addressing:

1. To continue the consideration of clearance, removal or destruction of Explosive remnants of war (ERW) in the context of meetings of experts and the conferences of the High Contracting Parties to Protocol V;

2. To address capacity building in the areas of surveillance, clearance, removal and destruction of ERW at the national and community levels.

One more topic that has been proposed for this afternoon’s discussions is the issue of existing ERW.

Let me now briefly introduce the issues proposed for our consideration.

On clearance, removal or destruction of ERW under Article 3:

It is well known that the objective of Protocol V is to prevent the humanitarian suffering through the clearance and destruction of ERW. Article 3 of Protocol V sets out the responsibilities of States in control of contaminated territory and users of explosive ordnance and the measures to be carried out to facilitate clearance operations. To that end, States and
organizations are encouraged to provide information and updates on their progress towards fulfilling the objectives of Article 3 and any challenges they have experienced in carrying out the clearance and destruction of ERW.

On capacity building:

This year there will be a special focus on capacity building in the areas of surveillance, clearance, removal and destruction of ERW at the national and community levels. Capacity building can include the provision of financial, managerial and technical support in order to enable governments and communities to manage and carry out their clearance programmes in the long term and for these operations to be sustainable. Both affected and donor States are encouraged to share their experiences on capacity building. The distinguished experts are invited to address the following questions. What capacity building activities have been carried out? Have these been successful? If not, what challenges have been encountered? Has there been follow-up on the capacity building exercises? And what lessons have been learnt?

Addressing existing ERW

While the key focus of Protocol V is to establish a framework to prevent humanitarian harm from ERW in the future, the discussions on clearance would not be complete without considering how States are dealing with ERW from past conflicts (otherwise known as “existing ERW”).

In order to stimulate debate on this matter, a Food-for-thought paper has been prepared on existing ERW. My intention is not to renegotiate the obligations of Protocol V concerning existing and future ERW. Instead this is an opportunity six years after the entry into force of Protocol V to hear from affected States on their experiences and challenges with clearing existing ERW and whether they have the necessary procedures in place and resources to address this problem.
It is for these reasons that I asked States in preparing for this session to consider the following questions:

1) If you represent a State affected by existing ERW, does your government have reliable data on: (a) the extent of the contamination, (b) where the ERW is located, and (c) what type of explosives and munitions caused the ERW?

2) What are the reasons for existing ERW being a persistent problem on your State’s territory?

3) Has your government evaluated the long term impact of existing ERW?

4) Which government agency or department is responsible for dealing with existing ERW?

5) What resources are available for the clearance of existing ERW?

6) If a civilian finds a piece of existing ERW, would he or she know who to notify to ensure that the ERW is cleared and destroyed?

7) From the work carried out under Protocol V, what do you consider to be important to support States affected by existing ERW? What more could be done under Protocol V to support affected States?

During this afternoon session we will work together with the participants of the UN Mine Action Directors Meeting arranged by UNMAS for the representatives of the national mine action and demining centers from a number of the UXO affected countries. I hope that this joint synergetic session will be useful for the audience of the Meeting of Experts as well as for the Directors of mine action centers. Invitations have been extended to the participants of the mentioned UNMAS event to take part in a Session on clearance in the framework of the Protocol V Meeting of Experts.

Thank you for bearing with me during this lengthy introduction.

In order to get our discussions under way I would like to introduce Mr. Rasmus Stuhr Jakobsen, who is Head of Section for Danish Demining and has a wealth of experience from different field operations around the world. Mr. Jakobsen, it is a pleasure to have you join us today and you now have the floor.