Excellency,

I am honoured to serve as the President-designate of this year’s Twelfth Conference of the High Contracting Parties to Protocol V on Explosive Remnants of War (ERW) and I look forward to working with all delegations.

The clearance of explosive remnants of war (ERW)

In accordance with the decisions taken at last year’s Eleventh Conference and the 2016 Tenth Conference (Annex I), this year the focus of our work during the Meeting of Experts, scheduled from 12 to 13 June for one and a half days, will largely focus on the clearance of ERW.

The proposed programme of work below sets out the issues to be considered at this year’s Protocol V Meeting of Experts.

Tuesday, 12 June 2018 – 3:00 to 6:00 p.m.

Sharing of experiences on the clearance of ERW. Affected High Contracting Parties and States are encouraged to respond to the following set of questions during the discussion:

(i) Who is the national focal point in your country on the clearance and destruction of ERW?
(ii) What steps have been taken to survey and assess the threat posed by ERW?
(iii) How are areas requiring clearance prioritized?
(iv) What steps have been taken to assess and prioritize the needs and practicability of marking, clearance and removal or destruction of ERW?
(v) What steps have been taken to mark and clear the contaminated areas and destroy ERW?
(vi) What are the challenges to completing the clearance of ERW?
(vii) What steps have been taken to mobilize resources to carry out these activities?

High Contracting Parties, in a position to do so, are encouraged to report on a voluntary basis on their readiness to contribute to facilitating the marking and clearance, removal or destruction of ERW. Such States may also wish to speak on how they determine the priority areas to be cleared and the challenges they have encountered in providing assistance with clearance operations.
Wednesday, 13 June 2018 – 10:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m.

With the input of expert presenters, there will be focused exchanges on:

(i) How are States prioritizing areas for clearance? What improvements could be made?
(ii) What measures can be taken to ensure the efficiency of surveillance and clearance operations?
(iii) What are the key challenges being experienced in clearance operations? For example, how is the clearance of urban areas being conducted?
(iv) What new technologies are available to assist with the clearance of ERW?

National reporting

Once the consideration of clearance has been completed, there will be an update on national reporting under Protocol V. At the Eleventh Conference there was agreement on a number of measures to assist High Contracting Parties with both the rate and quality of national reporting, which are set out in Annex II to this letter. The United Nations Office of Disarmament Affairs will be invited to provide an update on the implementation of those measures and the rate of reporting in 2018.

Wednesday, 13 June 2018 – 3:00 p.m. to 6:00 p.m.

Article 4

During last year’s Eleventh Conference, Sweden made a useful presentation on its Article 4 procedures. This presentation was built on the work done under Protocol V by Ireland. During the informal activities held in August 2017, the CCW Implementation Support Unit made a first attempt at a practical exercise on Article 4. The United Nations Office for Disarmament Affairs will be invited to again hold that practical exercise and in doing so, to utilize Sweden’s Article 4 procedures.

Please accept, Excellency, the assurances of my highest consideration.

President of the Twelfth Conference of the High Contracting Parties to Protocol V

Mouayed Saleh
Ambassador and Permanent Representative of Iraq to the United Nations Office at Geneva
Recommendations agreed at the Tenth Conference on the clearance of ERW and Article 4

(Excerpt from the final document, CCW/P.V/CONF/2016/8, paragraph 26)

(a) In accordance with the Protocol V Guide on National Reporting, affected High Contracting Parties are encouraged to report on the following issues:

(i) Who is the national focal point in your country on the clearance and destruction of ERW?

(ii) What steps have been taken to survey and assess the threat posed by ERW?

(iii) What steps have been taken to assess and prioritize the needs and practicability of marking, clearance and removal or destruction of ERW?

(iv) What steps have been taken to mark and clear the contaminated areas and destroy ERW?

(v) What steps have been taken to mobilize resources to carry out these activities?

(b) High Contracting Parties are encouraged to exchange experiences on challenges in completing clearance programmes.

(c) High Contracting Parties are encouraged to report on a voluntary basis on their readiness to contribute to facilitating the marking and clearance, removal or destruction of ERW.

(d) During the next review cycle the work on clearance should consider, inter alia, how States are prioritizing areas for clearance, measures to ensure the efficiency of surveillance and clearance operations, exchange of experiences on clearance challenges such as the clearance of urban areas, and new technologies to assist clearance operations, where appropriate.

(e) All High Contracting Parties are called on to implement Article 4 procedures, provide appropriate training to their armed forces and ensure such procedures are reflected in their standard operating procedures, as adaptable to national circumstances.
Measures to assist with national reporting

(a) In accordance with the Implementation Support Unit’s mandate to “Support the High Contracting Parties, on request, in the implementation of the CCW and its Protocols...”, support is to be provided to High Contracting Parties on national reporting. Such support may take the form of one-on-one briefings in Geneva on the requirements of national reporting under Protocol V and the provision of detailed written information.

(b) The Implementation Support Unit is to facilitate contact between High Contracting Parties requiring assistance and experts from other High Contracting Parties or relevant organisations. The Unit is to invite experts from the following groups to provide advice on national reporting: the roster of experts for the CCW Compliance Mechanism; High Contracting Parties that have submitted comprehensive national reports; and expert organizations including the United Nations Mine Action Service (UNMAS), International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) and the Geneva International Centre for Humanitarian Demining (GICHD). Assistance could be provided via email, video conferences or bilateral exchanges.

(c) The Implementation Support Unit may conduct in-country visits and where necessary with expert support as outlined above.

(d) It is underlined that any support provided could only be done so with the consent of the country requesting assistance.

(e) If financing is required this will be provided via voluntary contributions. The Implementation Support Unit’s work on providing advice on national reporting and the management of any funding will be carried out in consultation with the officeholders and be reported on in the Unit’s annual report.

(f) The Conference further decided that support provided for Protocol V national reporting would be reviewed in 2021 to coincide with the Sixth CCW Review Conference.