

Statement of the International Committee of the Red Cross
to the First Meeting of States Parties to the Protocol on Explosive Remnants of War

5 November 2007

The First Meeting of States Parties to the Protocol on Explosive Remnants of War is an important opportunity to continue the international community's efforts to end the humanitarian suffering caused by explosive remnants of war. These efforts began in the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons more than 7 years ago and culminated with the adoption of the Protocol on Explosive Remnants of War in November 2003. The Protocol's conclusion and entry into force were significant developments of international humanitarian law and a substantial strengthening of the CCW. The Protocol's principal obligations had not previously existed for all types of explosive ordnance.

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of specific requirements
In our view, this Protocol, which addresses all mun. used, off- or on-land, is the prox. of all relevant info + clearance and asst. to victims of existing ERW. It is the most ambitious project yet undertaken by CSW. If implemented in the spirit of solving specific

With the Protocol now binding international law for some 35 States Parties, work can now turn towards making it an effective instrument on the ground. The ICRC views this First Meeting of States Parties as an essential step in helping the Protocol achieve its humanitarian objectives and to minimize the impact of ERW on civilian populations in war affected countries. As we have said in the past, this meeting will be a chance for States Parties to begin work on the Protocol's implementation and should be used to determine how best to "operationalize" the Protocol's obligations.

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The recommendations of the Preparatory Committee and the papers prepared by the President of the Conference outline useful elements which can facilitate these objectives. National reporting requirements, recommendations on the exchange of information and the creation of an ERW database will be helpful in evaluating the state of implementation of Protocol V.

promoting and

Particularly valuable, in our view, are the recommendations to convene informal meetings of experts to look at the Protocol's operational aspects. Such meetings will be useful to examine the "nuts and bolts" of the Protocol and, in particular, to highlight the national measures required to ensure that a State is in a position to undertake its obligations once it is involved in an armed conflict. Informal expert meetings would allow States Parties to share experiences on the kinds of measures required and any challenges encountered in putting into operation.

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Equally important will be the role these meetings can play in addressing the massive problem of existing ERW. Existing ERW is perhaps the single most important issue which States Parties need to work on in the foreseeable future. The response of States Parties to the problem of existing ERW will be crucial in determining whether the Protocol is seen as a living instrument relevant to suffering which is caused by ERW today or not. Informal meetings can be valuable in engaging affected States about the impact of ERW on their territory, their efforts to remedy the situation and their needs and priorities for assistance. A robust and effective process can also attract non-party States to adhere to the Protocol and the CCW more generally, if they are not already a State Party.

if they are not already parties

So

In closing, the decisions taken today will set the course for future work on explosive remnants of war. They are only a start, but nevertheless can establish the framework for further and more substantive discussions and analysis. More importantly, our action will be a signal to affected countries and, in particular, the civilians who live with the daily threat of these weapons, that States Parties are determined to end the suffering caused by explosive remnants of war and to bring relief to the victims of these weapons, their families and their communities, as well as to prevent similar situations from occurring in the future.

meetings

We urge all States, and particularly all those which were involved in negotiation of this Protocol, which are not yet parties, to adhere to this instrument without further delay as a matter of urgency.