Konventionawaffenkonvention; Protokoll V (Explosive Kampfmittelrückstände); Neunte Konferenz der Vertragsstaaten, 9./10. November 2015;

General exchange of views;

Statement of Austria

Mr President,

Allow me at the outset to congratulate you on the assumption of the chair of this conference and assure you of the full support of my delegation.

Austria aligns herself with the statement (to be) delivered on behalf of the European Union (earlier / later) during this discussion. Let me offer a few additional remarks from a national perspective.

Notwithstanding that Austria has been lucky to enjoy peace since 1945, we are still in the process of implementing obligations of ERW clearance. This is an illustration of the fact how ERWs continue to pose a threat to the public even decades after hostilities have stopped. So in 2014 alone, our national demining service found and defused explosive World War II remnants on our territory on more than 1,000 occasions, amounting to 35 metric tons of highly dangerous material.

Beyond national borders, Austria is currently involved in cooperation and assistance activities in Bosnia Hercegovina and in Moldova aiming at the enhancement of the safety and security of ammunition depots as a preventive measure to prevent the creation of new ERWs.

Mr President,

Clearance, victim assistance, preventive measures, as well as cooperation and assistance are key areas for the implementation of Protocol V. Reporting is an important tool to build trust and confidence among States Parties. We recommend the coordinators of the various thematic areas for having provided their reports to this meeting which contain a wealth of important information, as well as guidance what remains to be done.

In order to make implementation of Protocol V still more effective, it is important to continue to look for possible synergies with other international legal instruments, such as the Antipersonnel Mine Ban Convention, and the Cluster Munitions Convention, in particular in areas such as clearance and victim assistance. Universalisation of these two instruments is directly beneficial for the cause of Protocol V.

Unfortunately, today in many regions new explosive remnants of war continue to be created. One significant contributor to this worrying trend is the wide-spread use of explosive weapons in populated areas. That practice therefore should be of concern
not only to the humanitarian community in general, but also to States Parties to Protocol V specifically.

In closing let me therefore use the occasion to inform delegates that recently Austria together with the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs assembled in Vienna representatives from interested States, the International Committee of the Red Cross, United Nations entities, as well as civil society organisations to look into possible paths towards an international response to the challenge of the use of explosive weapons in populated areas. Among the outcomes of the meeting was the proposal that interested States should elaborate together a multilateral political commitment, possibly in the form of a political declaration, recognising the urgent humanitarian problem associated with the use of explosive weapons in populated areas, and committing States to take concrete steps. Austria is happy to share more information about the results of deliberations at Vienna with interested delegations.

Thank you Mr President.