

**CCW Protocol V meeting of experts  
Discussion on Victim Assistance**

**Remarks by Ireland**

Madam Coordinator,

Allow me at the outset to congratulate you on your assumption of the role of coordinator on the important topic of victim assistance, and to assure you of the full support of my delegation.

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The international community celebrated a few months ago the one hundred and fortieth anniversary of the St. Petersburg Declaration, the first formal agreement prohibiting the use of certain weapons in war. The International Military Commission which agreed on the declaration, in its own words, "fixed the technical limits at which the necessities of war ought to yield to the requirements of humanity".

Since the first momentous step taken in St. Petersburg in 1868, developments in weapons and in the nature of warfare, and developing perceptions of the requirements of humanity, have led to the adoption of several further international legal instruments aimed at prohibiting or restricting the use of certain weapons. Dealing in legal instruments with the consequences of the use of weapons is a somewhat newer area of activity, but one which has been developing rapidly in recent years, as evidenced in the case of this Convention by the adoption in 2003 of Protocol V on Explosive Remnants of War.

Ireland welcomed the adoption by the Second Conference of the High Contracting Parties to Protocol V of a Plan of Action on Victim Assistance. It is fitting that this Plan of Action was adopted on the ninetieth anniversary of the day on which the guns fell silent on the Western Front in the First World War, a conflict which left millions of people severely wounded, in addition to the millions who lost their lives.

Ireland is in the fortunate position of not having any ERW-affected areas on our territory, and in not having responsibility for significant numbers of victims of explosive remnants of war. At the same time, we are deeply conscious of the suffering and needs of victims in other countries, and take very seriously our obligation in Article 8, paragraph 2 of the Protocol to "provide assistance for the care and rehabilitation and social and economic reintegration of victims of explosive remnants of war". We believe that international cooperation and assistance is a vital element in addressing the needs of victims.

The Plan of Action, we believe, is a useful tool and can contribute to ensuring efficient, effective and sustainable assistance to victims. The contribution which can be made by the Plan of Action can be enhanced by consultation among High Contracting Parties at meetings such as this, as well as by the appropriate compilation and submission of requests for assistance, a matter which is being dealt with in another part of our discussion.

I would like to take this opportunity to provide some information on relevant policy approaches and actions undertaken by Ireland.

Ireland's most recent major policy document on overseas development assistance, the 2006 "White Paper on Irish Aid", is founded on the principle that it is right that we help those in greatest need. It points out that people worldwide are bound together by a shared humanity, and that from this shared humanity comes a responsibility to those in great need beyond the borders of our own state.

Among the focal areas for work identified in the White Paper, special mention is given to disability and development. It is stated that people with disabilities are among the most vulnerable and marginalised in developing countries, and that if the Millennium Development Goals are to be achieved, the needs of disabled people must be considered alongside other development challenges by national governments, donors, international organisations and NGOs.

In line with the principle of non-discrimination reflected in the Plan of Action, Ireland does not discriminate on the basis of the causes of disability.

I will give two recent examples of actions which have been undertaken by Ireland and which are relevant to the issues under consideration:

In Vietnam, Ireland has cooperated in 2007 and 2008 with the International Labour Organisation and with local non-governmental organisations to support the role of women with disabilities as entrepreneurs, as well as to create awareness, by means of an international photographic exhibition, of issues affecting people with disabilities in the workforce. In our view, support to rehabilitation and social and economic reintegration is a vitally important element of cooperation and assistance. The active participation of people with disabilities in the social and economic life of their communities and countries not only contributes to the economic well-being of themselves, their families and communities, but also to their own sense of self-worth and dignity.

In another country which has suffered greatly from armed conflict, Angola, Ireland has funded a major Community Based Rehabilitation project for people living with disabilities. This has focused on first identifying the needs of people with disabilities, ensuring their acceptance in their communities, and opportunities to ensure a worthy and decent life for themselves and their families. An important element of the project is the long-term sustainability of the progress achieved, and therefore the involvement of a wide range of local actors is a central feature. The project is conducted in close cooperation with the associations of people living with disabilities, in line with point (f) of Action 4 of the Plan of Action.

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Madam Coordinator,

Ireland will be happy to contribute to further discussion of the important topic of assistance to the victims of explosive remnants of war, and wishes you every success in the conduct of your very worthwhile work.