Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons
Seventh Conference for Protocol V on Explosive Remnants of War

General Exchange of Views

11 November 2013

Mr President

On behalf of the Australian delegation, we congratulate you on your election as President of this Conference and offer you our cooperation and support in guiding us to a successful conclusion.

Australia would also like to thank each of the thematic Coordinators of Protocol V for continuing to address the humanitarian challenges associated with Explosive Remnants of War. It is through their efforts that we continue to build effective implementation of this Protocol.

Australia recognises that Protocol V under the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons (CCW) has been and will continue to be an important instrument of international humanitarian law. Protocol V continues to reinforce awareness of the serious post-conflict humanitarian problems caused by explosive remnants of war and the responsibilities of parties to a conflict to minimise this risk to civilians. This is also particularly significant today, as we commemorate Remembrance Day, the day in which we recognise the sacrifice of those killed in service of their countries in past wars.

Mr President

Australia has fully implemented Protocol V. Australian Defence Force (ADF) has in place relevant policy to implement the Protocol’s provisions. The ADF’s operational level headquarters in Australia maintains a comprehensive register that includes reporting of ERW incidents. The register also provides detailed information about: reporting steps taken; any future action required to deal with the items; and any warnings issued or risk education provided to military forces or the local community.

Mr President

Australia is pleased to see that 84 States are now parties to Protocol V. We welcome Cuba, Kuwait, Zambia and Bangladesh who have consented to the Protocol over the past year.

Australia continues to urge all CCW States Parties to join Protocol V. The universal acceptance and effective implementation of Protocol V is one of the most valuable ways to minimise the impact of explosive remnants of war.

For our part over the last year, we assisted the Pacific Islands Forum to host a follow-up meeting on explosive remnants of war (ERW) for the Pacific Island nations in Brisbane in June 2013, which was a useful opportunity to also encourage these states to accede to the CCW and join this Protocol.
Australia's commitment to action on ERW is long standing and recognises the significant impact that UXO has on communities, often for many years after hostilities have ceased. Fewer explosive remnants on former battlefields means less chance of tragic accidents for civilians, less source material for groups who wish to use it for terrorist activities and greater prospects for economic development.

Since 2010, Australia is pleased to have provided to over 20 countries over $100 million in mine action assistance to help reduce the humanitarian suffering and socio-economic impact of ERW, including landmines and cluster munitions. A majority of this assistance has been allocated to priority clearance and risk education activities as well as a significant amount to victim assistance.

We recognise the importance of rehabilitating and reintegrating people with disabilities, including victims of ERW, into society. Australia also works in partnership with civil society to ensure that victims of UXO understand and exercise their rights to achieve greater inclusion in social and economic activities.

Australian Defence Force’s Explosive Ordnance Disposal (EOD) contribution to South West Pacific Nations – Operation RENDER SAFE – also continues and includes cooperative clearance, removal and destruction activities. In addition, in 2012, the Australian Defence Force also provided assistance for African countries to perform clearance, removal and destruction of ERW and provided specialist equipment to the UN Support Office to the African Union Mission in Somalia.

Internationally, we must all do more to minimise the impact of explosive remnants of war in post-conflict situations. Australia remains committed to working with the international community to achieve this goal.

I thank you, Mr President.