The Permanent Representatives of the
High Contracting Parties, Signatory and Observer States to the CCW
Protocol V on Explosive Remnants of War
Geneva

Excellency,

We are writing to you in our capacities as the Coordinator and the Friend of the Coordinator on Victim Assistance pursuant to Article 8 (2) of the CCW Protocol V on Explosive Remnants of War (ERW) and would like to inform you on the preparations for the consideration of victim assistance at the 2012 Meeting of Experts of the High Contracting Parties to Protocol V (Geneva, 25 to 27 April 2012).

We may recall the responsibility that High Contracting Parties have taken with regard to victim assistance under Protocol V, Article 8 (2), stating that "each High Contracting Party in a position to do so shall provide assistance for the care and rehabilitation and social and economic reintegration of victims of explosive remnants of war." In 2008, the High Contracting Parties adopted the Plan of Action on Victim Assistance (see Annex I) as an instrument to guide the work of High Contracting Parties in implementing policies and measures for victim assistance in order to effectively address and meet the needs on the ground.

The Report on Victim Assistance to the Fifth Conference of High Contracting Parties of CCW Protocol V in 2011 demonstrated the continued prevailing need for a better understanding of the state of implementation of Article 8 (2) and the Plan of Action on Victim Assistance. Of particular relevance to the forthcoming Meeting of Experts, the High Contracting Parties decided:

(a) To request the Meeting of Experts to continue consultations and work on the template for national reporting on victim assistance under Article 8 of the Protocol and to request the Coordinator to make suggestions to the Sixth Conference of the High Contracting Parties based on these consultations;
(b) The Meeting of Experts in 2012 to hold a session on how States assess the needs of victims of explosive remnants of war, with a view to making recommendations to the Sixth Conference;
(c) The Coordinator and the Friend of the Coordinator with the support of the CCW Implementation Support Unit to provide an assessment of the responses to the questionnaire and the sections of the national reports which address victim assistance at the Meeting of Experts in 2012.
In order to fulfill our common mandate, we invite delegations to prepare their contributions for the Meeting of Experts’ session on Victim Assistance along the following two lines:

- In accordance with its mandate and in coordination with the Coordinator on National Reporting, the Meeting of Experts will continue consultations on the template for national reporting on victim assistance, based on the draft adopted by the Fifth Conference of High Contracting Parties (Annex II). You may recall the successful exercise of 31 States responding to a voluntary Questionnaire on Victim Assistance circulated by the Coordinator in 2008. Informed and motivated by this valuable exercise, the High Contracting Parties decided to take the direction of developing a template for national reporting on victim assistance in order to ensure an informed understanding of High Contracting Parties about the state of implementation of victim assistance provisions at national level and hence to enable effective cooperation and assistance under the Protocol in this field. Therefore, prior to the forthcoming Meeting of Experts, we invite and encourage all States, those affected by ERW and those that are not, to the extent possible, to test the available draft template and feed their experience back to the Meeting of Experts. We would appreciate if States willing to participate in this “pilot” could indicate their interest to the Coordinator and Friend of the Coordinator on Victim Assistance who will be happy to assist them with any further questions in this regard.

- This year’s session on victim assistance will lay a particular focus on the challenges that various stakeholders face in their efforts to ensure that assistance to ERW victims at the national, local and community level is provided according to the needs of victims. All delegations are encouraged to share their observations and experiences in this regard. In order to guide our discussions, we would like to ask States to focus on two to three key challenges or unmet needs, which they perceive would require either more attention or an adjustment of policies at national or local level or stronger facilitation support from the international level. Inter alia, discussions could touch upon the quality of information available on the needs of victims; on how policy priorities are identified, monitored and revised; on the lines of responsibility in implementing national policies or action plans; on information exchange mechanisms among various stakeholders concerning needs assessment; as well as on the matching of needs and assistance.

In accordance with Action 4(f) of the Plan of Action on Victim Assistance under Protocol V, which requires close consultation with and the involvement of victims and their representative organizations in victim assistance, the Coordinator and the Friend of the Coordinator strongly encourage affected States to include survivors among their delegations at the upcoming Meeting of Experts.

We look forward to lively discussions and an in-depth exchange of information and national practices in the Meeting of Experts session on Victim Assistance. Should you have any further queries or seek additional information, please don’t hesitate to contact either ourselves or the Implementation Support Unit.

Yours sincerely,

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