Seventh Conference of the High Contracting Parties to Protocol V on Explosive Remnants of War to the Convention on Prohibitions or Restrictions on the Use of Certain Conventional Weapons Which May Be Deemed to Be Excessively Injurious or to Have Indiscriminate Effects

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Report
Generic preventive measures

Submitted by the Coordinator[1] on generic preventive measures

Introduction

1. Explosive remnants of war (ERW) are not only the result of munitions failing to explode as designed when employed during an armed conflict, they are too often the result of accidents or mishandling of explosive ordnance during the phases of production, packaging, storage and transportation. For this reason, Article 9 of Protocol V encourages High Contracting Parties "to take generic preventive measures (GPMs) aimed at minimizing the occurrence of explosive remnants of war, including, but not limited to, those referred to in part 3 of the technical annex."

2. In the margins of the Sixth Conference, the Coordinator held an open ended meeting aimed at identifying a specific technical issue to be addressed by the expert meeting in 2013. All participants confirmed that, although the issue of the safe storage of ammunition has been addressed since 2009, the topic remains a high concern for governments and it deserves further consideration. Once again, countries were not prepared or willing to discuss other topics relevant to GPMs, such as the ammunition manufacturing process.

3. In preparation of the 2013 Meeting of Experts the Coordinator recalled the decision of the Sixth Conference, informed on the results of the aforementioned open ended meeting and invited High Contracting Parties to contribute actively to the discussions. Furthermore, prior to the meeting he invited countries where unplanned explosions at munitions sites recently occurred to share their experience.

[1] In accordance with the decision of the Sixth Conference of the High Contracting Parties to Protocol V on Explosive Remnants of War, as contained in paragraph 39(e) of its final document (CCW/P.V/CONF/2012/10), the discussions on generic preventive measures were led by Mr. Mario Amadei, Brigadier General, of Italy as Coordinator.

4. Given the importance of implementing GPMs, the Sixth Conference agreed to the Coordinator, with the support of the CCW Implementation Support Unit, to follow-up with those High Contracting Parties, which have not reported on their implementation of GPMs. To fulfil this part of the mandate the Coordinator carried out consultations with the few High Contracting Parties that submitted their national reports and indicated "not applicable" in Form G.

Progress on implementing the International Ammunition Technical Guidelines

5. The worldwide problems with the safe storage and handling of ammunition resulted in the development of the International Ammunition Technical Guidelines (IATGs). In 2012, the General Assembly in its resolution A/RES/66/42 (12 January 2012) welcomed the completion of the IATGs and "the establishment of the "SaferGuard" knowledge resource management programme for the stockpile management of conventional ammunition, developed by the Office for Disarmament Affairs, with the full involvement of the Mine Action Service of the Departments of Peacekeeping Operations". The IATGs are now in the second phase of implementation. Several tools have been developed to assist this work and focus on training courses for military and law enforcement officials and tracing and accounting.

6. In the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Cote d'Ivoire, Libya, Seychelles and Somalia, UNMAS has been working to implement the IATGs. Lessons learnt from this work are: (1) Where there is an absence of technical expertise then it is important to set out the IATG's three levels and depending on the situation faced apply the most relevant level. (2) A chapter of the IATGs addresses clearance of munitions storage areas and it is important to ensure that implementing partners understand the implications of this work. (3) The IATGs is related to the work on small arms and light weapons and training on these two issues is to be combined.

The safe storage of ammunition

7. An area of intense focus within the Meetings of Experts consideration of GPMs has been on the safe storage of explosive ordnance and this continues to be an issue of high concern to governments. Illustrating the problems in this area was the findings of the Small Arms Survey from its work on unplanned explosions at munitions sites (UEMS). There had been more than a two-fold increase in the number of accidents between the periods 1987 – 1996 to 1997 – 2006. The average rate of casualties per year from 2007 to 2012 has been 1064. This is more than three times the average rate of casualties per year from 1987 to 1996, during which the overall number was 333 casualties.

8. It is widely recognised that one of the major challenges for the safe storage of ammunition is that countries continue to keep large stockpiles when this simply is not required. The main remedy is to dispose of ammunition, especially ageing ammunition. The other challenges identified are: the amount of ammunition being stored exceeding the capacity of the depot; inadequate resources; decaying infrastructure; ineffective inspection systems; poor handling of ammunition, repairs, maintenance and disposal systems; a lack of trained staff; and ineffective national legislation. There is no international legally binding protocol to address the safe and secure storage of ammunition stockpiles although several guidelines elaborated by some international organisations and specialised agencies and NGOs exist.

9. Mr Steve Brown, North Atlantic Treaty Organizations (NATO) Maintenance Supply Agency (NAMSA) in outlining the priorities and work of the NATO Trustfund made reference to three incidents which emphasised different aspects of stockpile management. The first took place in 2002 in Nigeria where there was a well designed and laid out ammunition depot. Over time, the township's boundaries expanded overrunning the original safety area of the depot while the amount of ammunition being held increased. Due to a fire in a coffee shop, which spread quickly into the depot, 1500 people were killed. The second incident took place in 2011 in Cyprus, where ammunition confiscated from a ship was stored for two years in an area close to a naval base and a power station. One of the storage containers started to bulge, which was caused by the breakdown of propellant. As a result there was an explosion that affected the power station and resulted in casualties. The total cost of repairing the power station was 2 billion Euros. The third incident took place during September 2012 in Turkey. There an ammunition depot had been built in accordance with NATO standards, but it was due for closure and had not been maintained. On day of accident over 300 000 grenades had been returned including mixed types of grenades piled together. In conditions of poor lighting, one person dropped a box causing an explosion that resulted in a much larger explosion and led to casualties and 90 houses damaged. This presentation showed the large variety of problems a country has to take into account in designing and managing an ammunition storage facility but it also demonstrated the engagement of the international community in tackling this issue.

10. Mr Daniel Redelinghuys, Mines Advisory Group (MAG), presented that organisation's experience of and approach to work on Physical Security and Stockpile Management (PSSM). When carrying out an assessment, MAG focuses on: assessing the vulnerability, which concerns the number of surplus munitions; determining the probability of the occurrence of a threat (such as theft, external attack or mismanagement); defining the level of risk; measuring and considering the potential impact of the hazard on the surrounding population; and informing the strategy and programming options. A lesson learnt has been that data from assessments is crucial for informing effective programming and project sustainability. However, given that information associated with munitions is considered much more sensitive for security and armed forces, time needs to be invested to develop confidence and trust.

11. Mr John Rawson, Geneva International Centre for Humanitarian Demining (GICHD), in presenting the "Ammunition Safety Management Toolkit" explained that the aim was to protect vulnerable communities from explosive hazards using low-cost and low-technology methods. It recognised that the first level of the IATGs was a high standard to reach. The toolkit breaks down this first level into easily attainable steps. The first stage focuses on making the munitions safe through destroying abandoned explosive ordnance or moving it to temporary field storage. The second stage involves field-managing and salvaging abandoned explosive ordnance in a temporary field store and ensuring that it is properly managed. The third stage requires bringing all explosive ordnance to permanent storage and then moving it to being in compliance with the lowest IATG standard. For the first two stages an international consultant would be involved to provide guidance and training. The concerned government would need to provide people to carryout the work and vehicles. The toolkit will detail what is needed to carry out a particular stage. For example, the training and qualifications personnel requirements, what resources are required and what exactly needs to be done. The aim is to bridge the implementation gap between the existing standards and level 1 of the IATGs.

12. Albania faced a number of challenges concerning the storage of ammunition and is committed to preventing future explosions. As a result of unplanned explosions, there had been 145 casualties and 834 injuries. In response to these problems, Albania is working on evaluating and disposing of all surplus ammunition stock by the end of 2013. NATO and other international standards had been implemented into national laws. To deal with this

situation excess munitions have been evaluated and surplus stock disposal is planned by 2013.

Safe storage in civilian facilities

13. Previous discussions focused on safe storage in military facilities. An equally important matter is the safe storage in civilian facilities, which include production factories or demilitarization plants. In response, Spain spoke on the regulation of its civilian companies. Companies managing explosives have to submit detailed plans to the ministries of industry, interior and defence. All companies managing military explosive devices are required to implement specific security measures. In manufacturing centres the Ministry of Defence provides guidance on quality assurance and certifies that buildings are suitable for the developing and storing explosives. Such buildings are monitored on a daily basis by the police. In all of this work, Spain is guided by the IATGs, international health and safety management system 18001 (OHSAS), relevant NATO tools and United Nations Saferguards.

14. For those countries with inadequate munitions stockpile programmes, the United States of America regards the IATGs as a “how to” manual for establishing a strong programme. The United States of America has in place munitions safety programmes that comply with the intent of the IATGs, but exceed this framework’s requirements as its programmes apply to all aspects of the lifecycle of munitions and not only storage. Implementing the IATGs is a challenging and expensive effort. Financial assistance and expert support are needed to help committed countries develop safe and secure munitions storage. The United States Of America’s Department of Defense implements a Stockpile Conventional Munitions Assistance Programme to provide training and support to allies and partners in the disposal, demilitarization, physical security and stockpile management of potentially dangerous stockpiles of explosive ordnance.

15. The United States of America explained that for non-Department of Defence industrial explosive ordnance operations, the Government is not involved in the day-to-day safety management. However, some responsibilities lie with the Department of Defense and the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives (ATFE).

Recommendations

16. The Seventh Conference of the High Contracting Parties to Protocol V may wish to take the following decisions:

(a) To encourage High Contracting Parties to carry out measures to ensure the safe storage of their munitions and in particular to pay special attention to the quantity of munitions being stored, aging munitions, the adequacy of the infrastructure of the storage facilities and ongoing management of storage munitions sites;

(b) To encourage the High Contracting Parties to implement the International Ammunition Technical Guidelines and part 3 of the technical annex to Protocol V and report on such work in their Protocol V national annual reports;

(c) To evaluate whether there is still the need to continue consultations on generic preventive measures in a different format other than the one established in accordance with Article 10, paragraph 1 of the Protocol;

(d) To hold a practical workshop on the management of munitions sites during the 2014 consultations; and

(e) To task the CCW Implementation Support Unit to follow-up on key issues with High Contracting Parties that have not yet reported on their implementation of generic preventive measures.