



Statement by His Excellency Archbishop Silvano Tomasi, Permanent Observer of the Holy See to the United Nations and Other International Organizations in Geneva at the 9th Conference of High Contracting Parties to Protocol V of 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
Geneva, 9 November 2015

Mr. President,

At the outset, the Holy See Delegation would like to congratulate you for your election and we look forward to working with you to make our meeting a success in preventing and reducing the suffering of whole populations living in conflict areas.

Several military conflicts are unfolding in different regions of the world, from Europe to the Middle East to Africa, and the world is watching passively or even ignoring cynically. The humanitarian consequences of these conflicts are horrendous: Hundreds of thousands of dead and injured, millions of refugees, whole generations sacrificed. The parties to different international instruments of international humanitarian law developed to face these kinds of situations, at the least to minimize the humanitarian suffering, seem very little willing to live up to their responsibility.

This annual meeting of States parties to Protocol V of the CCW is an opportunity to have an honest review of the relevance of this treaty in the real world. It is legitimate to ask the simple question: what did Protocol V change for entire populations living in conflict areas? Are these populations better protected from the explosive remnants of war? Are any preventive measures taken by the parties to the conflicts to reduce the harm caused to the civilian populations, especially the weakest ones: children, women, elderly, disabled people?

Too many countries are plagued with explosive remnants of war from old and new conflicts. The extensive use of ammunitions with high failure rates are provoking a large number of victims and preparing for a humanitarian catastrophe in the future. Abandoned weapons are another concern leading to arms trafficking, terrorist attacks, destabilizing factors that open the way for new conflicts. This issue was a big problem in the last years and is now a reason to worry about the future in many regions and for many populations.

In this area, States parties to Protocol V have a special responsibility. It is not a secret that several States parties, during the negotiations and the adoption of this Protocol, were seeking a stronger treaty able to respond effectively to the root causes

and the consequences of explosive remnants of war. Notwithstanding the weakness of this instrument, this Delegation hoped and is still hoping that a serious and honest implementation of Protocol V would make a difference in the lives of affected populations. What remains is to overcome the many qualifiers and ambiguities and to embark on a real and effective cooperation between affected countries and users of weapons. Beyond the letter of treaties, legally weak or strong, all actors have a shared responsibility to protect each and every human person out of a shared common dignity, out of an ethical responsibility and out of caring for the future of a peaceful and stable world order.

Mr. President,

The legacy of the present conflicts should not make whole populations hostage of the explosive remnants of war and abandoned weapons. A serious implementation of Protocol V will help to keep a glimpse of hope to prevent additional victims. It is of great importance that Protocol V be an effective element making possible reconstruction, reconciliation and development once conflicts are over.

Mr. President, I thank you.