



Permanent Mission of Italy
UN - Geneva

**Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons
(Protocol V Annual Conference)**

13 November 2023

**Statement delivered by Ambassador Leonardo Bencini
Permanent Representative of Italy to the Conference on Disarmament**

President,

I would like to express Italy's appreciation for your appointment as Chair of this meeting and to assure of my Delegation's support. Italy aligns itself with the statement by the European Union. I would like to add some remarks in my national capacity.

President,

Italy attaches the greatest importance to Protocol V of the CCW and to its universalization and pays the utmost attention to the humanitarian impact of Explosive Remnants of War – a continuation of civilians' suffering, especially the most vulnerable ones such as women and children. In addition to posing a threat to the health and safety of civilian populations, they represent a major obstacle to the reconstruction of the social fabric and the economic recovery of the concerned areas. Italy can testify to the humanitarian and social impact that these remnants can have even in the long-term: in our territory, we still occasionally recover ERWs almost eighty years after the end of World War II.

Recent events in Ukraine and the Middle East have shown once again the absolute need to protect civilians during armed conflicts. A year has passed since we adopted the EWIPA declaration. Today more than ever we are confronted with the effects of war on civilians, who represent the vast majority of victims, with a significant impact also on children. The disturbing images of the last few weeks are a call for action.

We deeply regret the repeated use of certain heinous weapons in areas of conflict, especially

in the context of Russia's unjustified, illegal and unprovoked war of aggression against Ukraine.

President,

Humanitarian mine clearance is a central element for the promotion of international peace and security, as well as for economic and social development in areas characterized by post-conflict situations. The Italian "Fund for Humanitarian Demining and Reclamation of Areas with Explosive Remnants of War" aims at financing ERW's related activities. These include risk education and training, assistance to survivors, destruction of stocks and awareness-raising.

In 2022, more than € 8.5 million was allocated to support the ICRC's work in Afghanistan, Ethiopia, Mali, Niger, and Somalia and of UNMAS in Iraq, Palestine, Syria, and Sudan. Since the establishment of the Fund in 2001, we have allocated almost eighty million euros, including to the "Italian Campaign Against Landmines" and the Geneva International Centre on Humanitarian Demining (GICHD).

In this context, I would also like to recall the extensive clearance of ERWs by the Italian Armed Forces operating abroad. For this kind of activities we have established a dedicated national Centre of Excellence to deal with all types of explosives devices, which has also been engaged in training and capacity building activities.

As current chair of the Mine Action Support Group (MASG), Italy has identified five pillars to be considered as priorities in the field of humanitarian mine clearance: i) protection/assistance/rehabilitation activities; ii) education on mine risk and awareness-raising activities; iii) advocacy for main international conventions; iv) stronger cooperation between Member States, the inclusion of private actors and the sharing of good practices; v) limitation of the environmental impact of explosive ordnance.

We look forward to further working with all Member States in order to avoid the unnecessary and unacceptable pain and suffering caused by these weapons.

I thank you, President.