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### **Information Sharing as a Tool to Protect Civilians from the Effects of UXO/ERW**

Discussion/Information paper prepared by  
the delegation of the United States

#### **Introduction**

Recent events in Kosovo and Afghanistan have demonstrated how the rapid sharing of information on the location of unexploded ordnance can facilitate clearance efforts and help safeguard civilians. This paper presents information that may be of benefit to UXO clearance personnel and other CCW experts. The U.S. delegation offers this paper, at the request of the Coordinator, to promote discussion among Governmental Experts rather than to reflect any official policies or positions of any State Party to the CCW.

#### **Humanitarian information requirements**

Effective clearance activities may include the following key categories of information, i.e. information that:

- Describes the location of the munitions as accurately as possible. Such information can be used to help prioritise clearance efforts and mark suspected danger areas.
- Indicates the number and type of munition used.
- Describes the general characteristics of the munitions used, such as shape, size and colour, to support the development of comprehensive and coordinated education programs for civilian populations, aid workers and peacekeeping forces.
- Suggests the best method for destroying or neutralizing the harmful effects of the munitions, and
- Is timely and provided in an easy-to-use format (to include compatible map coordinates) to allow humanitarian efforts to keep pace with sudden population movements.

Such information can allow civilians to be warned of the possible presence of UXO and facilitate their removal.

### **Preserving security interests**

The release and timing of such release of such information can, and in many cases will, raise legitimate security concerns. Certain information on targeting, for instance, could reveal operational insights which are typically guarded closely by military organizations. Likewise, the sharing of “render-safe” procedures may reveal sensitive technical characteristics about weapons and may therefore not be readily releasable. Accordingly, accommodating legitimate security interests is an important issue for consideration.

### **Information sharing considerations**

Issues for further consideration relating to the sharing of information to facilitate safe clearance of UXO include:

1. Recording and maintenance: should parties endeavour to record and maintain all information concerning the general location of where munitions were used?
2. Essential content: such information may contain (i) general target locations sufficient to determine the general area of the munitions; (ii) the number and types of munitions used; and (iii) general clearance and avoidance procedures as appropriate.
3. Recipients in areas outside of control: should parties make available to one another, the Secretary-General of the UN, or specified clearance organizations, as appropriate and as rapidly as possible, information in their possession concerning munitions they used in areas not under their control?
4. Preparation and information management: in peacetime, should States put in place appropriate procedures to collect, retain, and disseminate, as appropriate, such information so that *ad hoc* procedures are not required during armed conflict?
5. Provision of information: what are the considerations related to the rapid and timely sharing of such information? Can this information be provided only after the cessation of hostilities or, if circumstances permit, could it be shared as soon as a threat to civilian populations exist?

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