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Rt Hon. Lord Peter Goldsmith KC
Chair of International Agreements Committee
House of Lords
London
SW1A 0PW

9 February 2024

Dear Lord Goldsmith,

3rd Report of Session 2023–24, Scrutiny of international agreements: Protocol V to the Conventional Weapons Convention on Explosive Remnants of War

I am writing in response to the International Agreements Committee's report of Protocol V to the Conventional Weapons Convention on Explosive Remnants of War by which the Committee has reported to the House for information. I address the matters that the Committee has highlighted for attention at paragraph 12 of the report:

12. We welcome the fact that the Government is finally taking steps to ratify Protocol V, which is long overdue. However, we regret that the Government has not been fully transparent with Parliament about the reasons for the twenty year delay in ratification of this important humanitarian treaty. We call on the Government to explain the reasons for the delay.

As previously explained to the Committee, the length of time it has taken for the UK to ratify Protocol V is due to a comprehensive cross-Government review being undertaken. It considered the legal, financial, and operational implications of ratification as well as the roles and responsibilities of relevant government departments. I accept that this review took longer than expected, but this was because the issues were considered sequentially, and time was required to resolve complexities that were identified. This Government is therefore pleased to have been able to resolve this complexity and reach a positive outcome on ratification.

Whilst it may have taken the UK longer than originally hoped to ratify Protocol V, UK operational policy and practice has been in line with the Protocol's obligations. We support work that aims to protect civilians, such as the Global Mine Action Programme, and we are considered a world leader in the protection of civilians in armed conflict.

Yours ever,

Leo Docherty MP
Minister for Europe