



IRELAND

Joint Statement on Explosive Weapons in Populated Areas (EWIPA)

By
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Permanent Representative of Ireland to the United Nations

On behalf of:

Angola, Argentina, Austria, Bangladesh, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Brazil, Bulgaria, Central African Republic, Chile, Costa Rica, Croatia, Cyprus, Czech Republic, El Salvador, Finland, Georgia, Germany, Guatemala, Iceland, Indonesia, Islamic Republic of Iran, Italy, Liechtenstein, Luxembourg, Madagascar, Malaysia, Malta, Mexico, Monaco, Montenegro, Mozambique, New Zealand, Norway, Peru, Portugal, Republic of Moldova, Samoa, San Marino, Serbia, Slovenia, Spain, Sri Lanka, Sweden, Switzerland, The Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Uganda, Ukraine, Uruguay, Zambia and Ireland

UNGA73 First Committee
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Explosive Weapons in Populated Areas
Thematic Debate on Conventional Weapons
UNGA 73
Joint Statement

Chair,

1. I have the honour to speak on behalf of Angola, Argentina, Austria, Bangladesh, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Brazil, Bulgaria, Central African Republic, Chile, Costa Rica, Croatia, Cyprus, Czech Republic, El Salvador, Finland, Georgia, Germany, Guatemala, Iceland, Indonesia, Italy, Islamic Republic of Iran, Liechtenstein, Luxembourg, Madagascar, Malaysia, Malta, Mexico, Monaco, Montenegro, Mozambique, New Zealand, Norway, Peru, Portugal, Republic of Moldova, Samoa, San Marino, Serbia, Slovenia, Spain, Sri Lanka, Sweden, Switzerland, The Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Uganda, Ukraine, Uruguay, Zambia and my own country, Ireland.
2. We remain gravely concerned at the humanitarian harm being caused during active hostilities in populated areas and in particular by the use of explosive weapons with wide area effects.
3. Explosive weapons have a devastating impact on civilians and civilian objects around the world. We must act to enhance compliance with international humanitarian law to ensure the protection of civilians during armed conflict. This is an obligation shared by all parties involved in armed conflict.
4. The use of explosive weapons in populated areas has been shown to cause long-term humanitarian harm, which far outlasts the conflicts in which they are used. Beyond the immediate injuries and deaths caused, the destruction of housing, schools, hospitals, water and sanitation systems and other crucial infrastructure means that the civilian population is severely affected over the longer term.
5. This devastation, in turn, acts as a catalyst for the displacement of people within and across borders, rendering displaced persons and refugees vulnerable to exploitation and abuse.

6. There is overwhelming evidence that the use of such weapons can have a long-term impact on the recovery and development of affected communities. Reports of serious humanitarian harm have been substantiated in many of today's major conflicts. We welcome the on-going work of civil society to empower and give voice to those affected by armed violence and encourage further research into the potential gendered impacts of EWIPA.

Chair,

7. It is widely recognised that civilians continue to bear the brunt of armed conflicts around the world. In his latest report on the protection of civilians in armed conflict, issued in May this year, the U.N. Secretary-General reported that "the state of protection of civilians is bleak, and the need for action to address it is urgent." The SG's report calls for efforts to enhance respect for international humanitarian law (IHL) and the protection of civilians and civilian objects. This is a position we support wholeheartedly and we know many other States do too. It is clear that where we cannot prevent or resolve conflict, we must work to strengthen the protection of civilians.
8. The latest UN SG report indicates that over 42,000 people were killed or injured by explosive weapons in 2017, of which 32,000 or three out of every four victims were likely to have been civilians. This is a 38% increase on 2016. Moreover, when air and ground launched explosive weapons were used in populated areas, 92% of those killed or injured were civilians. These statistics are alarming and reinforce the need for States to act now. We must undertake efforts to reverse this trend and to enhance respect for and compliance with IHL. In many conflict situations, the question is how the existing rules are being interpreted and translated into policies and practice on the ground. Much more must and can be done to reaffirm and clarify the application of IHL in armed conflicts.

Chair,

9. We welcome the priority attached to EWIPA by the Secretary General in the new Agenda for Disarmament and recognise his call that all States should support the development of measures designed to address the humanitarian impact of EWIPA. This could be achieved through the development of a political declaration, the development of common standards and operational policies or through the sharing of policies and practices.

10. We welcome the range of initiatives by States to engage constructively to address the humanitarian harm caused by EWIPA and are encouraged by the increased engagement on this issue, including in different international fora such as the CCW.

11. Any initiative undertaken should enhance the protection of civilians and civilian objects in armed conflict in compliance with IHL and contribute to alleviating humanitarian harm resulting from the effects of explosive weapons in populated areas.

Chair,

12. As part of our broader efforts on EWIPA, we will continue to support Civil Society that has worked tirelessly and effectively over the last several years to address the challenges posed by EWIPA.

13. We remain seized of efforts to address the humanitarian harm caused by EWIPA, through the achievement of a possible future political declaration and by maintaining support for other relevant initiatives, including regional conferences. We value and welcome the support of any State willing to commit to these aims.

Thank You.