



**Statement by the International Network on Explosive Weapons to the
UN General Assembly's First Committee on International Security and Disarmament, New
York**

Ms. Roos Boer, 16 October 2019.

Thank you Chair,

I am speaking today on behalf of INEW, the International Network on Explosive Weapons. We are an international civil society coalition, established in 2011, based on our shared concern over the widespread humanitarian harm when explosive weapons are used in towns and cities.

When explosive weapons are used in populated areas, civilians are killed and injured, vital infrastructure upon which civilians rely is destroyed, and people are forced to flee. Data suggests when explosive weapons are used in populated areas, 9 out of 10 people injured or killed are civilians. This pattern of harm has been well documented across a range of contexts including Afghanistan, Cote d'Ivoire, Gaza, Iraq, Nigeria, Syria, Ukraine and Yemen, to name a few examples.

In addition to high levels of death, injury and physiological trauma, the use of explosive weapons in populated areas causes severe and long-lasting damage and destruction to essential infrastructure and services, including schools, hospitals, housing, water and sanitation systems, leaves massive contamination with unexploded ordnances and is a driver and cause of forced displacement.

In particular, we are concerned about explosive weapons with wide area effects that are problematic when used in populated areas, because of the risk that they pose to civilians. These weapons are often intended for use on open battlefields, but present an excessively high risk of harm to the civilian population when used in towns and cities due to their inaccuracy, high explosive content or because multiple munitions are fired into an area.

Madame/Mr. Chair,

We have been encouraged by the number of states that gathered in Vienna for a Conference on the Protection of Civilians in Urban Warfare earlier this month and the level of engagement at this meeting. This conference represents a turning point, as we start to prepare for the first open consultation on an international political declaration in Geneva next month, aiming to address the humanitarian suffering from the use of explosive weapons in populated areas.

The momentum for states to establish a political declaration has built over the past few years, including through leadership from regional meetings in Africa and Latin America and the Caribbean. In our view, the establishment of a strong international political declaration would be a necessary and achievable step to strengthen the protection of civilians in urban warfare, and in particular to create a momentum and forum to address concerns over the use of explosive weapons in populated areas. In order for such a political declaration to prevent the humanitarian harm from explosive weapons in populated areas, such a declaration should commit states to:

1. Develop operational policies and procedures that will stop the use of explosive weapons with wide area effects in populated areas
2. Share positive practice and experiences
3. Provide assistance to victims and affected communities
4. Support and undertake data gathering disaggregated by age, sex and disability
5. Enable effective humanitarian and protection measures, and
6. Build a community of practice, including through regular meetings to discuss the issue and progress towards reducing harm.

In doing this, it will strengthen the normative framework – and will make it clear, at a time when armed conflict is increasingly waged in urban settings, that we need to ensure greater protection of civilians in towns and cities from the humanitarian impact of explosive weapons.

Thank you Chair.