



**Statement by the International Network on Explosive Weapons
UN General Assembly First Committee – Disarmament and International Security**

**New York
October 8, 2021**

Delivered by Cesar Jaramillo

Chair,

I am speaking on behalf of INEW—the International Network on Explosive Weapons—a coalition of civil society organizations working to prevent the devastating humanitarian consequences from the use of explosive weapons in populated areas.

When explosive weapons are used in populated areas, a staggering proportion of casualties—nine out of ten—are civilian. This is a troubling trend that has held over time and across conflict zones; one that constitutes a humanitarian emergency of the highest order.

In addition to direct harm to individuals, critical civilian infrastructure is damaged and essential services are impacted. Such a degraded environment results in psychological trauma, hampers relief efforts, and forces people from their homes—among several other manifestations of long-term harm.

Of course, the victims of explosive weapons are more than abstract statistics. It is real, non-combatant individuals who bear the brunt of this serious humanitarian problem. From Syria to Ukraine to Palestine. Old and young. Farmers and students; nurses and poets. In the past decade alone, almost a quarter million civilians have been killed or injured.

Yet this is an eminently preventable problem whose solution is known: states must avoid the use of explosive weapons with wide area effects in towns, cities and other populated areas and aid those who have been affected. INEW is convinced that it is not beyond the capacity of the international community to establish robust commitments in this regard.

After more than a decade working on this issue, today we are optimistic about the ongoing multilateral process that aims to address this problem through a politically binding declaration, which is expected to be agreed and then adopted in the coming months. Let us all recognize the urgency of seeing this process through.

INEW strongly believes that a clear, unambiguous commitment to avoid the use of explosive weapons with wide area effects in populated areas must be included in the political declaration.

The need to comply with existing obligations, including International Humanitarian Law, should be seen as a minimum baseline for this process—not its ultimate objective. It is from this starting point that we must seek to strengthen the protection of civilians in armed conflict, not simply to restate existing protections.

Chair,

It behooves the international community to heed the voices of victims, civil society experts and officials from the UN, ICRC and Member States who have engaged in the process toward a political declaration in good faith and are seeking the strongest possible commitments from states. Any efforts to weaken the text of the political declaration or to perpetuate the status quo around the use of EWIPA must be resisted.

The grave humanitarian impacts caused by EWIPA demand a decisive and concerted multilateral response. This is a problem that cannot be ignored; the ongoing political process to address it is an opportunity that cannot be squandered.

Thank you.