



STATES AGREE FINAL TEXT OF POLITICAL DECLARATION ON THE USE OF EXPLOSIVE WEAPONS

- The text of the political declaration on the use of explosive weapons was finalized today in Geneva with overwhelming support from states.
- A group of states have already expressed intentions to sign the declaration or have indicated they are working towards that decision, including Argentina, Austria, Belgium, Brazil, Bulgaria, Chile, Finland, France, Germany, Guatemala, Italy, Japan, Mexico, Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, Philippines, Poland, Republic of Korea, Spain, State of Palestine, Sweden, Switzerland, United Kingdom, United States, and Uruguay.
- The political declaration recognizes the devastating harm to civilians from bombing and shelling in towns and cities, and it commits states to impose limits on their use and take action to address harm to civilians.

17 June 2022 – States, civil society, and international organizations met in Geneva on 17 June and finalised the text of the political declaration aimed at strengthening the protection of civilians arising from the use of explosive weapons in towns, cities, and other populated areas.

With overwhelming support and a packed room, the text of the political declaration was [tabled and presented by Ireland](#), chair of the process, and agreed to without changes. There was overwhelming gratitude and support for Ireland's leadership of the process over the past three years, along with support for the text of the declaration, with several delegations announcing plans to sign it in Dublin later this year at the signing conference.

Despite contestation of this issue by many militarised states throughout the process to develop a political declaration – where some states refused to recognize that explosive weapons present distinct humanitarian problems and resisted efforts to impose limitations on their use – many of these states have announced support for the text reflecting a sea change in positions.

Many states either expressed their intention to sign the political declaration when it is open for signature at a signing conference in Dublin or indicated that they are working towards this decision. These states include Argentina, Austria, Belgium, Brazil, Bulgaria, Chile, Finland, France, Germany, Guatemala, Italy, Japan, Mexico, Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, Philippines, Poland, Republic of Korea, Spain, State of Palestine, Sweden, Switzerland, United Kingdom, United States, and Uruguay.

Today, nearly all states that shared views on the final declaration text recognized the harm caused by explosive weapons when used in populated areas. Many also acknowledged the devastating direct, indirect, and/or reverberating effects of their use on civilians and, in some cases, the particularly high risk of civilian harm presented by the use of explosive weapons with wide area effects. One state – New Zealand – credited the lengthy period of negotiations on the declaration text with helping it better understand the full extent of civilian harm caused by the use of explosive weapons in populated areas. Another state – Germany – indicated a desire for continued discussion to help better understand the foreseeable indirect effects of explosive weapon use.

The political declaration commits states to impose limits on the use of explosive weapons in populated areas to avoid civilian harm. It also commits states to assist victims and address the long-term impacts that stem from damage and destruction to civilian infrastructure.

Several states and civil society organizations acknowledged that the declaration – particularly its key commitment in paragraph 3.3 – fell short of expectations for a clear and explicit commitment to avoid the use of explosive weapons in populated areas when they have wide area effects. However, many shared the view that the text provides a platform to work and promote changes in state policy and practice through implementation of the declaration at the national level. In this regard, the adoption of the political declaration is a starting point for a process of work that will now begin – not an end point.

A key priority now is that states join the political declaration and work to implement it effectively and interpret it in ways that will prevent harm to civilians and make a difference on the ground. The next practical step will be the signing conference later this year – where the first states to join the declaration will be able to discuss the way ahead. Other states will still be able to join the declaration over time.

The meeting closed with a round of applause for Ireland's efforts, with Ambassador Michael Gaffey noting that the declaration will be relevant to current as well as future conflicts, and that it sends out a message on the protection of civilians which has never been more necessary.

Agreement of the political declaration will be a major step forward and a significant contribution to protecting civilians from bombing and shelling in towns and cities. States joining the declaration will be recognising that explosive weapons pose specific challenges for the civilians when they are used in towns and cities and are committing to take action to address those challenges.

States will need to work to implement the political declaration without delay, developing policies to operationalise the declaration at the national level which must bring about changes of practice in line with the declaration's aim and commitments. This will be particularly important when it comes to changing military policy and practice.

Building stronger standards and driving forward significant change takes time. While the declaration's impact might not be immediate, it demonstrates states' commitments to addressing the challenges that civilians face when explosive weapons are used in populated areas. States have the primary responsibility to protect civilians – and INEW will be working to promote the declaration and to promote strong implementation and interpretation of its provisions.