



INEW statement to the Dublin Adoption Conference

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Thank you, Minister Coveney,

The International Network on Explosive Weapons (INEW) is very pleased to join everyone here to mark this milestone in our collective journey.

The continued, heavy toll on civilians from bombing and shelling in cities and towns is unacceptable, but this Declaration provides hope for the future.

Joining this Declaration is a recognition of a grave humanitarian problem. It is an expression of solidarity with those affected. And it is a commitment to take further action to strengthen the protection of civilians both during and after armed conflict.

The adoption of this Declaration is a milestone, but it is not the end of the journey. We have a long path ahead of us - one that will require committed and sustained work from all of us, in the spirit of partnership and collaboration that has been the hallmark of the process to date.

This Declaration is the first international recognition of the civilian harm and suffering from the use of explosive weapons in populated areas. It recognises this problem as one of the greatest threats to civilians in armed conflicts today. And it recognises that beyond the thousands of civilians that are directly killed and injured by blast and fragmentation every year, countless more suffer long-lasting impacts: families lose loved ones; children lose childhoods; homes, schools, and hospitals are reduced to rubble; and people are forced to flee the towns and cities where they live and work.

The Declaration is a practical tool that sets an agenda for change.

It promotes revisions to military policy and practice, in order to prevent harm.

At its core is the commitment to impose limits on the use of explosive weapons in order to avoid civilian harm - recognising that the risk to civilians increases when explosive weapons have wide area effects.

And it recognises that attacks that damage critical and interconnected civilian infrastructure have long-lasting and severe effects, and it requires armed forces to better understand and mitigate these.

In addition to prevention, the Declaration also addresses the grave humanitarian impacts of past and ongoing use - promoting comprehensive assistance to victims, access to conflict zones by humanitarian actors, and improved data-gathering.

Stepping out from the specific areas of action that this Declaration mandates - we can see a broader significance for our shared commitment to the protection of civilians.

The Declaration builds on states' existing obligations under international humanitarian law, but it does not merely condemn illegal attacks. Crucially, it recognises that policies and practices can, and must, go beyond these legal minimums, and be continuously strengthened, if we are doing all we can to save lives.

But today we should celebrate our collective achievement. Despite the ongoing suffering we see and the difficult political climate, the declaration is an important reminder that progress can be made when humanitarian commitment is coupled with political leadership and a willingness to work in partnership.

Turning the promise of the Declaration into a reality on the ground will be a long process of work, and states are likely to move at different speeds.

But through the process ahead, the International Network on Explosive Weapons is committed to continuing the partnership with states, the UN and ICRC that has provided the foundation of this achievement. We will promote this Declaration's universalisation and implementation, continue to monitor the impact of explosive weapons use on civilians, and keep working to identify strategies that can reduce harm.

We thank Ireland for its committed leadership of the process to develop the declaration, and Austria for taking a leading role in the years before. Their leadership has been instrumental in bringing us to this point.

Only by continuing to work together in a collaborative, committed and transparent manner, and by never forgetting the people at the heart of our efforts, can we ensure that the Declaration's goals will be pursued with the urgency and unwavering commitment they deserve.

Thank you.