



Concept Note

The first international follow-up conference to the

Political Declaration on Strengthening the Protection of Civilians from the Humanitarian Consequences Arising from the Use of Explosive Weapons in Populated Areas (EWIPA)

Oslo, 22 – 23 April 2024

Ongoing armed conflicts have highlighted the urgent and increasing need to protect civilians, including when explosive weapons are used in populated areas. The EWIPA Declaration is a testament to the vital importance of efforts to improve compliance with International Humanitarian Law and to better protect civilians in armed conflict.

Endorsed by more than 80 countries, the Declaration commits states to take steps to avoid civilian harm when conducting military operations.

The toll on civilians in urban warfare is harrowing. The Declaration recognises that the use of explosive weapons in populated areas can have a devastating impact on civilians and civilian objects, causing deaths and injuries, including lifelong disabilities.

The humanitarian consequences are devastating, not just the immediate harm caused by explosive weapons, but also severe and long-lasting indirect effects – often referred to as reverberating effects. The destruction of critical infrastructure such as water and sanitation systems, supply chains, health and education facilities and housing, disrupts the provision of basic services to civilians, and can lead to widespread need and years of suffering. The collateral damage of waging war and carrying out extensive bombardments in populated areas is well-known.

The Declaration reflects the endorsing States' commitment to review, develop and improve existing policies and practices to achieve stronger protection of civilians in armed conflict.

Taking the EWIPA Declaration forward

The conference in Oslo will bring together senior officials and experts from ministries of defence and foreign affairs, armed forces, international and regional organisations, civil society, private sector, and academia. The conference will meet in a collaborative spirit to take stock of implementation and discuss progress, opportunities and challenges, and the future follow-up of the Declaration.



The conference will provide an arena for discussing the central commitments of the Declaration, and building a shared understanding of the priority areas and key issues in implementing the Declaration, including different regional experiences and approaches. Another key aim is to foster cooperation between states and other participants to promote the awareness of the Declaration and to ensure that it gains more support and attention in the years to come.

States that have not yet endorsed the Declaration are encouraged to announce their formal endorsement during the conference.

The range of provisions contained in the Declaration is very broad, and the conference aims to address multiple overarching topics in panel discussions over the course of one day (23 April). These include military policies and practices, direct and indirect effects on civilians, data collection, victim assistance and universalisation of the Declaration. The focus will be on targeted, thematic discussions. The programme is not expected to allow time for a general exchange of views. A detailed agenda will be distributed well in advance of the conference. Following the conclusion of the conference, a chair's summary will be shared with all participants.

Bearing in mind paragraph 4.7 of the Declaration, which highlights the potential for meetings to include the exchange and compilation of good policies and practices, we invite any State that is willing and able to do so to contribute information to the conference regarding their good policies and practices, so this information can be included in an annex to the chair's summary.

The conference will be held on Tuesday 23 April at the Radisson Blu Plaza Hotel in Oslo. All participants are invited to a welcome reception on the evening of Monday 22 April.

Additionally, a Protection Forum will take place in the afternoon of 22 April, and thematic workshops will be convened on the morning of 24 April, please see information on these below.

Practical information

Endorsing states are invited to register two attendees. All participants must be approved by conference organisers. Participation by foreign ministry, defence ministry and/or armed forces personnel is encouraged. Other states, UN agencies, and civil society representatives may register up to two attendees, with participation subject to approval.



Registration should be completed as early as possible and at the latest by 15 March 2024. Please use the following application forms for [State delegates](#)¹ and for [organisations, academia and the private sector](#).²

A **sponsorship programme** will be available to participants from developing countries. If you wish to apply, kindly tick off this option in the registration form.

For more information about the conference, please contact ewipa2024@mfa.no. For questions regarding registration, hotel reservation or other practical issues, please contact ewipa2024@gyro.no

Protection Forum 2024 - Strengthening the Protection of Civilians from Explosive Weapons, 22 April

The International Network on Explosive Weapons (INEW) and the Norwegian Red Cross will co-host a Protection Forum on Monday 22 April afternoon from 12:00-16:00, prior to the official conference on 23 April. Conference participants are encouraged to attend. Participants can register for the forum using the following link:

<https://www.inew.org/events/osloprotectionforum/>

Thematic Workshops, 24 April

In addition to the Protection Forum, two thematic workshops will be convened after the official conference on Wednesday 24 April, on the topics of 1) military policies and practice and 2) humanitarian access and assistance. Conference participants are encouraged to attend and can select either workshop regardless of affiliation. Please register for the workshops using the following link:

<https://www.inew.org/events/osloworkshop/>

¹ <https://form.arkon.no/?id=10136&key=KqZ8xn>

² <https://form.arkon.no/?id=10118&key=yVgY7K>