



Federal Republic of Germany
Foreign Office

Adoption Ceremony

Political Declaration on Strengthening the Protection of Civilians from the Humanitarian Consequences arising from the use of Explosive Weapons in Populated Areas

Dublin
18 November 2022

Statement by
Ambassador Susanne Riegraf,
Deputy Federal Government Commissioner for Disarmament and Arms Control, Germany

Minister Coveney, Ministers, Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

Allow me to thank you, Minister Coveney, and the Republic of Ireland not only for today's adoption ceremony but also for your immense efforts over the last years. The world owes you and your colleagues deep gratitude!

Throughout this entire process - jointly shaped by governments, international organizations and civil society - Germany has underlined its grave concern about the devastating and often long term impact on civilians from the use of EWIPA. With our *Political Declaration* today, we are sending a clear message that this **toll is unacceptably high** and that we are committed to the **better protection of civilians** as well as to the **assistance to victims** of EWIPA.

Many of these civilian casualties result from situations where existing **IHL obligations are either not respected or even blatantly ignored**. This is for instance the case for **non-state actors**, such as the so-called Islamic State, Boko Haram or the Taliban. But as we gather today, we are also witnessing such unacceptable behavior by **states**: In its illegal war of aggression against Ukraine, **Russian troops** reportedly are directly or indiscriminately attacking civilians and civilian objects using explosive weapons. We condemn this behavior in the strongest possible terms; obligations under IHL and international law have to be fully respected. Also, Russia must immediately put an end to the war it started, and end the tragic suffering and loss of life it continues to cause.

Against this background, it is vital that our declaration includes a clear **call on *all* parties to armed conflict - signatories of this declaration and non-signatories, states and non-state actors - to respect IHL** and the humanitarian principles when using explosive weapons in order to minimize civilian harm.

Minister,

Many states and their armed forces are already implementing policies and practices designed to avoid, and in any event minimize, civilian harm when using explosive weapons. This declaration, and especially its **follow-up process**, should focus on **strengthening, further improving and exchanging such policies and practices**. In doing so, we can assemble a toolbox of good practices, to be used as a basis for trainings and for adapting rules of engagement.

Furthermore, future meetings should also discuss **the notion of “foreseeable indirect effects”** in order to adequately consider the reverberating consequences of the use of EWIPA.

Minister,

Our *Political Declaration* is a strong signal of commitment for a better protection of civilians and for victim assistance. We are **happy to endorse it**, and we sincerely hope that many more States will do the same. Germany stands **ready to energetically assume its role in an inclusive follow-up process**, with the participation of international organizations and civil society, to pave the way for tangible improvements on the ground and to address the humanitarian impact arising from the use of EWIPA!

Thank you.