



# Comments on the Second Revised Draft Political Declaration on EWIPA

Norwegian People's Aid (NPA) is part of the International Network on Explosive Weapons (INEW) and we highlight and refer to [INEW's detailed comments](#).

NPA thanks Ireland sincerely for its efforts in this process and encourages future signatories of the final text to engage in proactive and meaningful follow-up. We highlight the importance of reaching a final text with commitments that bring about real change for civilians. Furthermore, as a political declaration the text should separate legal and political commitments – for example by removing the reference to in accordance with IHL in 3.3, and in 3.5.

The work to continuously improve the protection of civilians does of course not end with this text, but it should be a big push in the right direction.

As an organization engaged in clearing explosives ordnance and protecting civilians from explosive weapons at large, NPA would like to submit a few additional comments in our own capacity. NPA has worked with clearing mines and explosives for 30 years and in 40 different countries in total. We observe that the use of EWIPA and contamination by explosive ordnance in urban areas are presenting new challenges to our sector.

Please find a few comments to the draft text:

1. NPA would like to suggest to replace the term Explosive Remnants of War (ERW) with the term explosive ordnance (EO), as the latter term would expand the scope of this declaration in a useful way. This can be done in both 1.4 and 3.5 in order to use consistent wording.
2. As a mine action operator, we observe that mine action activities take place in closer proximity to armed conflict in time and space than before, and often in urban settings. This is justified by humanitarian reasons, but it is often more challenging to clear EO in urban than in rural settings, including new risks related to conflict pollution and environmental hazards. While we support the current reference to the need for marking and clearance in point 3.5, we would like to suggest the following amendments to this paragraph:
  - a. Insert a reference to risk education and remove the reference to “as soon as possible after the end of active hostilities”. Appropriate and adapted risk education should take place immediately where civilians are at risk from explosive ordnance. NPA sees risk education as a category of activities designed to help civilians mitigate the risks related to explosive weapons they are subject to. This entails that risk education should be properly adapted to the specific risks posed by explosive weapons in a particular context, such as the types of munitions fired into or found in an area. Information on civilian self-protection can be potentially life saving for civilians trapped in settings where EWIPA is used.



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- b. Remove the reference to “in accordance with our obligations under applicable international law”.
    - c. Suggested wording 3.5: “Ensure the marking, clearance, and removal or destruction of explosive ordnance, as well as the provision of appropriate and adapted risk education, taking into account a broad range of risks related to the EO civilians are exposed to in an area, with the aim to enhance the protection of civilians”.
  3. Appropriate data collection on the use of explosive weapons and its effects in populated areas, and the sharing of such data, is very important to facilitate and render more effective both risk education and clearance, and to understand and document the humanitarian impact. The references to data collection should be interpreted as yet another tool to strengthen protection of civilians. Such data can help mine action organizations prioritize and respond quicker. NPA supports the 4.2 bis as suggested by INEW.
  4. NPA supports the Conflict and Environment Observatory (CEOBS) in that more attention should be paid to the relationship between environmental protection and the protection of civilians, and how the environment is negatively affected by armed conflict and the use of explosive weapons. We would like to suggest that the word “natural” in front of “environment” be deleted.
  5. NPA thinks that the description of reverberating effects adds to explaining the humanitarian consequences that this declaration text aims to address. It is very important to describe these effects, as they constitute core humanitarian issues. Reverberating effects refer to the effects of damage and destruction to often inter-connected infrastructure. It includes the destruction of housing, hospitals, and schools, power networks, and water and sanitation systems. Such effects go way beyond the immediate civilian death toll from an attack, they can be experienced by people in areas far beyond the time and location of an initial attack.