

Santiago Regional Meeting on Protecting Civilians from the Use of Explosive Weapons in Populated Areas

Communique

Representatives of 23 Latin American and Caribbean states¹, the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, the International Committee of the Red Cross, the International Network on Explosive Weapons and other civil society organizations, met in Santiago, Chile, from 5-6 December 2018, to share knowledge and evidence on the distinctive pattern of harm caused to civilians by the use of explosive weapons in populated areas, and to explore steps to address this harm at a political and operational level.

Representatives expressed concern that explosive weapons used in populated areas cause deaths, injuries and traumas to civilians, damage and destroy essential infrastructure and critical services, drive involuntary displacement, and leave explosive remnants of war that pose a threat in the long term, disrupt social coexistence, economic activities and compromise human security.

In their exchanges, the representatives concluded that the Latin American and Caribbean states as well as civil society can play a pivotal role in enhancing the protection of civilians from the harm caused by explosive weapons in a time when armed conflicts are increasingly fought in population centres.

Furthermore, the State representatives acknowledged the need for further actions to address this issue at national, regional and international levels, in particular, but not limited to, the following:

- Encourage collection of data and information to increase awareness and enhance knowledge about the impact of explosive weapons on civilians in populated areas;
- Avoid the use of explosive weapons with wide area effects in populated areas;
- Act to enhance compliance with international humanitarian and human rights law to ensure the protection of civilians and civilian objects, including school and hospitals during armed conflict and to contribute to alleviating humanitarian harm resulting from the effects of explosive weapons in populated areas
- Develop effective measures to prevent attacks in contravention of applicable international law against hospitals and schools and protected persons in relation to them;

¹ Antigua and Barbuda, Argentina, Barbados, Belize, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, El Salvador, Guatemala, Guyana, Haiti, Honduras, Jamaica, Mexico, Panama, Paraguay, Peru, Saint Kitts and Nevis, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, Uruguay.

- Fully support the process that will lead to the negotiation and adoption of an international political declaration on the use of explosive weapons in populated areas;
- Promote bilateral and regional cooperation through sharing experiences, good practices and expertise on reducing the harm caused by explosive weapons to civilians;
- Constructively engage in discussions and initiatives at international level that could effectively provide greater protection to civilians in armed conflicts;
- Foster deeper and further engagement from the Latin American and Caribbean states and facilitate increased involvement as a group of States;
- Continue and strengthen cooperation and partnerships with international organizations and civil society organizations to draw upon their relevant expertise and support;
- Channel contributions to the draft international political declaration on the matter, as well as engage in advocacy, at national, regional and international levels.

Santiago, Chile, December 2018