



## **DUBLIN CONFERENCE TO ADOPT THE POLITICAL DECLARATION TO PROTECT CIVILIANS FROM THE USE OF EXPLOSIVE WEAPONS IN POPULATED AREAS**

**19 November 2022**

Today in Dublin 82 countries officially endorsed the Political Declaration on the [Protection of Civilians from the Use of Explosive Weapons in Populated Areas](#), which had been finalised on 17 June 2022 in Geneva. The declaration is the culmination of a decade-long advocacy effort led by the International Network on Explosive Weapons (INEW), the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), and the United Nations and almost three years of diplomatic negotiations led by Ireland.

The use of explosive weapons in populated areas is the leading cause of civilian casualties in armed conflict, and the declaration is the first formal international recognition that this must be addressed urgently and directly. The declaration promotes stronger standards to protect civilians and commits states which endorse it, to take action to implement it by making changes to their national policy and practice, including military policies and operational rules of engagement.

The Dublin Conference to adopt the political declaration was held in a filled-to-capacity room at the Dublin Castle where Foreign Ministers, vice ministers, and other high-level diplomats from over 50 countries, as well as representatives of the UN, ICRC, and civil society, welcomed the document in statements that were celebratory of this monumental achievement, honest about the grave humanitarian consequences of explosive weapons, and realistic about the long road ahead towards greater protection of civilians in conflict.

The 82 endorsing countries came from all regions of the world and include major producers of explosive weapons, past users of explosive weapons in populated areas, and countries affected by armed conflict. Prompted by the United States' announcement in June that it would come to Dublin, all but six of NATO's 30 member countries (Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Montenegro, North Macedonia, and Poland) endorsed the declaration. Ukraine addressed the meeting to say it fully supported the spirit and principles of the declaration but will only be able to endorse it after the conflict ends and it regains full sovereignty over all its territory.

Foreign Minister Simon Coveney opened the meeting, followed by statements from the UN High Representative for Disarmament Affairs, the President of the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), the Coordinator of the International Network on Explosive Weapons, Syrian armed conflict survivor and activist Nujeen Mustafa, and the Prime Minister of Norway, who spoke by video. Ms. Mustafa delivered a powerful speech where she described the psychological harm she suffered as a

child with a disability growing up amid the bombing of her hometown Aleppo. On behalf of INEW, Laura Boillot noted the great promise of the declaration to improve the protection of civilians and presented civil society's expectations for the full implementation of the declaration and universalization of its norms. The Prime Minister of Norway noted its "firm commitment to stay the course," a reference to its interest in taking a strong role in the implementation phase. A representative of the Norwegian MFA later announced that Norway would host the first formal meeting called for under the declaration, likely in 2024.

Throughout the day and beginning with Irish Foreign Minister Simon Coveney and the UN High Representative for Disarmament Affairs, delegates emphasized the critical role played by INEW, ICRC, the UN and other advocates in pushing forward the process towards a declaration and expressing hope that this remarkably collaborative and constructive spirit will continue in the implementation phase. Indeed, they noted that in a time of so many global crises, it was heartening that a collective effort could still achieve such a remarkable achievement in the sphere of humanitarian disarmament. INEW in turn congratulated Ireland, and before it Austria, for their strong leadership and commitment towards the negotiation process, and also pledged to stay a central player in the continued work on universalization and implementation.

As noted by INEW, by endorsing the declaration states marked their recognition of the harm done to civilians by explosive weapons and expressed their solidarity with the victims of such violence in countries around the world. Delegations echoed this sentiment by repeatedly describing the direct and indirect harms caused explosive weapons used in populated areas in conflicts worldwide, some of them citing violence in specific countries like Syria, Ukraine, and Yemen, and a few – including Somalia, Palestine, and Croatia - taking note of the impact such violence has had on their own country in the past. States also repeatedly expressed their commitment to reduce such suffering in the future, not just through the endorsement of the declaration but through other concrete steps such as support for victim assistance, clearance of unexploded ordnance, and data collection.

While noting the promise of the declaration to provide greater protection for civilians, many delegates noted that today marked only one milestone in a long path ahead, a starting point—not an end point. Delegates noted the need to increase the number of states endorsing the declaration and otherwise expand adherence to its norms. They also called for a robust implementation process, with several states noting the utility of sharing good practices and otherwise collaborating to make sure the declaration makes a real difference on the ground. Several delegates called for the implementation phase to be as open, transparent and inclusive as the negotiations were.

Several delegates noted the potential for the declaration to improve military policies and practice, and improve the implementation of international humanitarian law. Yet several NATO members asserted their policies and practices were already in line with the obligations under international humanitarian law, while keeping open the possibility of further improvements if needed. Turkey was the only state to explicitly lay out restrictive interpretations of the declaration.

Parliamentarians issued a [Parliamentary Call to Action](#), already endorsed by 100 parliamentarians, urging all countries to adopt the declaration and to implement it in a "rapid, concrete and effective"

manner. They called for the creation of a "group of friends of the EWIPA political declaration" in national parliaments to encourage joint work within and outside the government on implementation, including via hearings, public questions, resolutions, media outreach, and public awareness-raising. It also called for collaboration among parliamentarians at the global level to exchange good practices.

The day started with a moving ceremony to unveil a new Memorial to the Unknown Civilian on the grounds of the Dublin Castle to pay tribute to the many civilian victims of bombing in populated areas, those who are otherwise just a number among all civilian casualty figures. Speakers were Amb. Eamonn Mac Aodha, Head of Mission to the UN in Geneva,; Manuel Patrouillard, General Director of Humanity and Inclusion; representative of ICRC (tbc) and Nujeen Mustafa a Syrian activist, disability and refugees rights advocate who fled bombing in her hometown of Aleppo, was present at the ceremony and placed a wreath on the Monument. Parliamentarians from different countries, representatives of states and civil society organisations held photos of victims of explosive weapons, and a minute of silence was held to pay tribute to all civilian casualties of armed conflicts around the world.

**List of endorsing states as of 18 November 2022:**

Albania, Andorra, Argentina, Australia, Austria, Belgium, Brazil, Bulgaria, Cabo Verde, Cambodia, Canada, Central African Republic, Chile, Colombia, Comoros, Costa Rica, Cote d'Ivoire, Croatia, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Denmark, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, El Salvador, Finland, France, Georgia, Germany, Greece, Guatemala, Guyana, Holy See, Hungary, Iceland, Indonesia, Ireland, Italy, Japan, Kenya, Kiribati, Kuwait, Laos, Liberia, Lichtenstein, Luxembourg, Madagascar, Malawi, Malaysia, Maldives, Malta, Mexico, Moldova, Monaco, Morocco, Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, Palau, Palestine, Peru, Philippines, Portugal, Qatar, Republic of Korea, Romania, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, San Marino, Senegal, Serbia, Sierra Leone, Saint Kitts and Nevis, Slovakia, Slovenia, Somalia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Togo, Turkey, United Kingdom, United States, Uruguay