

# **INEW statement at UN CCW meeting, 22 November 2018**

Statement by the International Network on Explosive Weapons to the UN Convention on Conventional Weapons (CCW)

Ms. Laura Boillot, 22 November 2018, Geneva

Thank you Chair,

The International Network on Explosive Weapons (INEW) is an international civil society network set up in 2011 to address concerns over the widespread humanitarian harm that results from the use of explosive weapons in populated areas. We call on states and other actors to recognise this pattern of harm to individuals and communities; to strive to avoid such harm by reviewing and strengthening national policies and practices including through data-gathering; to work for the full realisation of rights of victims and survivors; and to develop stronger international standards – including restrictions on the use of explosive weapons in populated areas.

The use of explosive weapons in towns, cities and other populated areas continues to be a major cause of humanitarian harm around the world, resulting in high levels of civilian deaths, injuries and trauma, as well as contamination of land. Damage and destruction to infrastructure such as schools, hospitals, housing, water and sanitation systems, causes severe, widespread, and long-lasting harm to civilians, is a driver of displacement, and has a negative impact on development.

INEW is particularly concerned about the use of explosive weapons with wide area effects, also referred to as heavy explosive weapons, such as multiple-launch rocket systems, heavy artillery, and large bombs and missiles, which put civilians at heightened risk of harm when used in populated areas. We welcome the repeated calls from the UN Secretary-General and the ICRC for states to avoid the use of explosive weapons with wide area effects in populated areas, and encourage states to endorse this recommendation in policy and practice.

Given the urgency of addressing this humanitarian problem, we welcome the increased attention that has been given to addressing this issue over the past year.

Humanitarian concerns over the use of EWIPA have been raised as a top priority for action by the UN Secretary-General in his reports on the protection of civilians in armed conflict and in the agenda for disarmament.

The regional meeting on protecting civilians from EWIPA co-hosted by the government of Mozambique in Maputo resulted in a Communique from African states to develop an internal political declaration. Next month, states in Latin America and the Caribbean will meet in Santiago, Chile for the second regional meeting on this theme.

Discussions in the EWIPA Talks workshops this year on identifying and discussing military policies and practice relevant to EWIPA have been a welcome initiative to discuss how militaries can change behaviour and better protect civilians in conflict.

Furthermore, last month the joint statement in EWIPA at the UN General Assembly's First Committee received support from a diverse group of fifty states, recognising this as an

important humanitarian issue, and calling for action to address this issue including the development of a political declaration.

INEW believe a political declaration could accomplish three crucial objectives, and incorporate a variety of measures to address humanitarian concerns and improve operational practice:

- First, it could set an important political standard and operational direction for parties to armed conflict to avoid using explosive weapons with wide area effects in populated areas.
- Second, it could provide a framework for states in developing national measures and guidance, and a forum to discuss results and assess effectiveness of such measures.
- Third, it could contribute to assisting affected communities and addressing civilian harm from the effects of explosive weapons.

The development of an international commitment would be best led by a partnership of states and organisations, committed to developing a tool that will reduce the humanitarian suffering that results from this pattern of harm by setting a clear and ambitious standard against this practice. We encourage states to start discussions towards developing an international political declaration in 2019.

Thank you Chair.