

**Conventional Weapons Convention
Meeting of High Contracting Parties
21-23. November 2018**

Agenda Item 10 - Emerging Issues

in the context of the objectives and purposes of the Convention

Statement Austria

Mr Chair,

Austria aligns itself with the EU statements. Let me add the following points in our national capacity.

Our Convention is firmly rooted in the IHL principles of proportionality, distinction and precautions in attack. In urban areas civilians are particularly vulnerable to the consequences of armed conflict. As underlined by the High Representative for disarmament affairs in her Opening Statement the humanitarian impact of urban conflict on civilians is devastating and at the highest level in decades. The fact that conflicts are increasingly taking place in urban areas brings substantial challenges to IHL. The use of EWIPA is a major cause for civilian casualties caused inter alia by non-state actors. The reverberating effects and the long lasting consequences of urban destruction severely impact civilian lives in conflict affected areas. When more than 90% of victims of EWIPA are civilians, it is clear that the fundamental principles of proportionality and distinction are not adequately respected. All parties to armed conflict, including states and non-state actors must fully comply with IHL.

The ICRC has unique global experience on how IHL is implemented and how conflicts affect civilians. Since 2011, based on this comprehensive expertise the ICRC has been repeatedly calling upon States and parties to armed conflicts to avoid the use of explosive weapons that have wide area effects in densely populated areas due to the high risk of indiscriminate effects and of consequent harm to civilians. Austria recalls that Article 57 of the Protocol Additional to the Geneva Conventions on precautions in attacks requires to "avoid, and in any event to minimize, incidental loss of civilian life, injury to civilians and damage to civilian objects". We call upon all states and non-state actors to respect IHL and in particular this principle.

The humanitarian consequences of the use of explosive weapons are severe and cross sectoral. All efforts on EWIPA are mutually reinforcing. In order to effectively tackle the issue we need political commitment and technical expertise. This is why Austria will continue to address this concern in all relevant fora, in particular humanitarian, international security, arms control and disarmament fora. And with a group of interested actors Austria will continue to seek to implement the Secretary General's call to work on a political declaration to enhance the protection of civilians from the effects of the use of EWIPA. We particularly

appreciate the rising awareness on the humanitarian harm. We thank the Irish delegation for their leadership on a remarkable statement on behalf of 50 States during First Committee.

Austria highly values the timely initiative of Germany to organise together with the GICHD and the ICRC the EWIPA talks. These discussions have allowed us to further analyse and broaden our joint understandings of the concern about the protection of civilians from the impact of EWIPA and possible measures to address the issue.

The broad participation in the EWIPA Talks is another evidence of the growing awareness about the impacts of EWIPA. We welcome the German Working Paper based on the discussions of the EWIPA talks. In the framework of this convention we could engage in a technical discussion on how to ensure better protection of civilians inter alia through the exchange of best practices. Such technical discussions and exchanges of best practices are complementary to efforts on a political declaration outside the Convention. Given the interest in the discussions on EWIPA, my country would additionally support a more structured approach to our deliberations inter alia through the inclusion of a separate Agenda Item in the CCW on EWIPA in 2019 and the recommendation outlined in the German working paper to establish an informal OEWG.

Mr. Chair,

On a final note, let me thank India and Switzerland for their working paper on S&T. We support the recommendation to map the CCW relevant S&T developments with the support of UNODA and UNIDIR and along the questions outlined in the paper, in particular the consideration of pertinent aspects of the UNSG's report.

I thank you.