

Joint statement, April 2024

The importance of addressing the environmental consequences from the use of Explosive Weapons in Populated Areas (EWIPA)

Thank you chair,

I speak on behalf of CEOBS, Geneva Water Hub, NPA and PAX.

The political declaration acknowledges the environmental impact from the use of EWIPA, and our organizations stress the need to address both the humanitarian and environmental consequences, based on the extensive evidence we have documented. We have demonstrated how EWIPA use causes environmental degradation that can generate acute and chronic health risks to civilians, and drives human displacement. Integrating measures to reduce harm is essential, along with evaluating and mitigating environmental damage, and the risks it poses to people, livelihoods and ecosystems.

EWIPA use causes environmental degradation that can generate acute and chronic health risks to civilians, and drives human displacement. Displaced communities are more exposed to environmental hazards. Inadequately managed displacement also places stress on ecosystems and natural resources.

These issues are unfolding globally in ways that are increasingly foreseeable. In Ukraine, the use of EWIPA is associated with damage to and disruption of hazardous industrial and energy infrastructure, often co-mingled with heavily populated areas. In Gaza, the intensive use of explosive weapons has destroyed critical infrastructure and properties, generating over 23 million tons of contaminated debris and threatening the shallow aquifer people depend upon for drinking and livelihoods. In Khartoum, Sudan, explosive weapons have damaged industrial areas and rendered water and sewage infrastructure inoperable.

These consequences continue long after the use of EWIPA is over.

Managing pollution, tackling vast quantities of debris and Explosive Remnants of War, can do further harm to the environment and people if not implemented in an environmentally sound manner. Sustainable recovery in areas impacted by EWIPA use requires robust environmental data, capacity building, and the provision of technical and financial assistance.

Based on our collective experience the following steps must be implemented to better protect civilians:

- States should ensure that the environmental risks are fully integrated in the planning of military operations and in determining the acceptability of actions
- Stakeholders must document the environmental-human effects of EWIPA use to better understand the full range of impacts, and ensure data is available to aid those working to address the consequences.
- Stakeholders should include the environmental dimensions of EWIPA in the discussions and implementation of the Declaration.

- Implementation of the EWIPA Declaration should align with relevant environmental processes and policies, for example the UN Environment Assembly resolution [“Environmental Assistance and Recovery in areas affected by armed conflicts” \(UNEP/EA.6/L.15\)](#) that will develop guidance on how to measure environmental damage from conflicts.
- There should be closer cooperation between entities tackling the environmental consequences, including the promotion of green recovery in areas affected by the use of EWIPA.

The Political Declaration is a welcome and overdue opportunity to address these challenges, and in doing so increase the protection of people and ecosystems.

Suggested links for further reading:

- [“Israel's bombing is turning Gaza into a wasteland”](#) by Pax
- [“First overview of EWIPA and Environmental Harm”](#) by Pax
- [“Fully foreseeable: The reverberating effects of war on water and health in Gaza”](#) by Geneva Water Hub
- [“The Environmental Consequences of the War in Ukraine”](#) by the Conflict and Environment Observatory
- [Russia’s destructive war across Ukraine leaves lingering public health and environmental crisis - PAX \(paxforpeace.nl\)](#)
- [Understanding the environmental impacts of the war in Ukraine](#) – preliminary project brief by Norwegian People’s Aid and the Conflict and Environment Observatory

This is a joint statement on behalf of the following organisations:



Norwegian People's Aid

