

**STATEMENT BY CANADA**  
**EWIPA Conference – SESSION 2 “Understanding Direct and Indirect Effects”**  
23 April 2024 – Oslo, Norway

On behalf of Canada, I would like to express our thanks to Norway for hosting this landmark event. The theme of explosive weapons in populated areas (EWIPA) could not be more consequential in 2024.

I would also like to thank all the panelist for their reflections on the important topics at hand, especially those with lived experiences and those working on the front lines as first responders.

It is clear we all need to do more to protect civilians and civilian infrastructure, a call to action that is even more pronounced when we observe the current devastating consequences of urban warfare.

Canada is particularly concerned with the enormous humanitarian impacts created by attacks that do not meet the IHL requirements of distinction, proportionality and precautions. Today we are witnessing a marked proliferation of indiscriminate and even targeted attacks on civilians and civilian objects.

But even where parties to armed conflict make credible efforts to meet their IHL obligations, we know that some consequences of attack are more visible than others.

In the planning and execution of operations, parties to armed conflict should take into account less immediate effects that are reasonably foreseeable in the circumstances, as these are frequently the ones that cause the most significant harm to civilians and civilian objects.

Accordingly, Canada strongly endorses the Political Declaration’s commitment to considering the reasonably foreseeable effects of military targeting on civilians and civilian objects. States should take measures through their policies and in the planning and execution of attacks to protect civilians over the long term, by protecting the systems of critical infrastructure that surround them, and we note the best practices highlighted in the previous panel. After the fact, battle damage assessments should be employed to collect data and inform future operations, as mentioned by some previous speakers.

This analysis must be informed by the best data available. To achieve this, states should support and facilitate the tracking of actual and potential civilian harm by the ICRC, the UN and NGOs. This data should include information on gender, age, disability, and other disaggregation considerations. This came out very strongly at the Protection Forum yesterday.

Our dialogue with these organizations is critical to a nuanced understanding the indirect effects of EWIPA. We all agree that high-quality data on the impact of EWIPA is key to meeting our commitments, and I agree with an earlier panelist that sharing of data and improving coordination of efforts is important.

However, we consistently hear that it is difficult for our partners to collect disaggregated data, and we need to consider what we can do to better support our partners.

For our part, and as one example, Canada funds UNIDIR's Gender & Disarmament Program, including in its efforts to conduct research including on the gendered impacts of EWIPA, and we encourage other Endorsing States to fund this important research.

In Canada, we employ gender advisors at the most senior levels of command to consider the differentiated impact of armed conflict, and to build those considerations into the planning and execution of military operations.

With this in mind, we hope that we can collectively better support data collection by relevant organizations, and thereby help to breathe more life into the Political Declaration.

I thank you.