

## Statement by the European Union

### EWIPA Conference

Oslo, 23 April 2024

Excellences, Ladies and Gentlemen,

On behalf of the European Union, I join others in thanking Norway for hosting this important conference at a time of many conflicts and consequently an ever increasing need for upholding international humanitarian law and the protection of civilians. I speak on behalf of the European Commission, ECHO and the European External Action Service.

**Promoting compliance with International Humanitarian Law** is a longstanding priority for the EU. We are committed to **support better protection of civilians in the context of urban warfare.**

The EU recalls that full compliance with IHL remains critical for the protection of civilians affected by armed conflicts, as well as for the protection of civilian infrastructure. We call on all parties to armed conflict to respect their obligations under IHL and emphasise the necessity for accountability for violations of IHL. The EU remains committed to keeping the promotion of, and adherence to, IHL at the heart of its external action.

In that context, the EU recognises the **importance of the EWIPA Political Declaration** and the need for its meaningful implementation.

Sadly, **civilian deaths caused by the use of explosive weapons increased in 2023.** We continue to observe harm inflicted to civilians in notably Gaza, Ukraine, Yemen, Syria and Sudan. The use of explosive weapons in attacks on healthcare, education or humanitarian aid increased in 2023. Consequently, **more needs to be done to ensure better protection of civilians and civilian infrastructure from explosive weapons.**

The EU focuses in particular on the **humanitarian consequences of explosive weapons in populated areas.** We are addressing this question from **several angles.**

Firstly, the EU supports a **project implemented by Humanity and Inclusion**, which focuses on **addressing the key** gaps in terms of data collection on civilian harm, exchange of information and good practices through evidence-based advocacy and promoting interaction between governments, civil society and international organisations.

Secondly, we **advocate for better protection of civilians** from the impact of explosive weapons and limiting the impact of hostilities in urban areas. We have also been **advocating for effective mine action**, which remains a prerequisite for safe provision of humanitarian assistance.

Thirdly, the EU provides **financial assistance to support mine action**. This includes assistance to victims, humanitarian demining and mine risk education. The EU remains amongst the largest donors for mine action in the world and intends to continue to be one.

Regarding assistance to **victims of mine accidents**, the EU pays particular attention to the **needs of persons with disabilities**, both by mainstreaming disability inclusion in our projects, but also by supporting **targeted actions** such as for instance **physical rehabilitation or provision of prosthetics for mine victims**.

Finally, we acknowledge that consequences of the use of explosive weapons in populated areas provoke **long-term effects** on the life of the civilian population. Hence, they need to be **addressed in a holistic manner by different actors operating along the humanitarian-development-peace nexus**.

Thank you for your attention.