

Second international conference of the
Political Declaration on Strengthening the Protection of Civilians from the Humanitarian
Consequences arising from the use of Explosive Weapons in Populated Areas

San Jose, Costa Rica, 19-20 November 2025

Session 1: General Debate: Strengthening the Protection of Civilians from the Use of Explosive
Weapons in Populated Areas 19.11.2025

Finland's statement

Mr. Chair, distinguished representatives,

Finland is honoured to contribute to this important discussion. The Political Declaration reaffirms our shared commitment to international law and emphasizes the imperative to avoid civilian harm during armed conflict.

Finland's approach is rooted in our comprehensive security model, which ensures that the vital functions of society are maintained through close cooperation between authorities, businesses, organizations, and citizens. This whole-of-society approach is not only a cornerstone of national resilience but also a practical framework for implementing the principles of the Declaration.

A concrete example is Finland's extensive network of civilian shelters. With over 50,000 shelters capable of accommodating nearly our entire population, we have embedded preparedness into legislation and practice. This infrastructure, combined with rapid warning systems and proactive evacuation planning, enables timely protection of civilians in emergencies.

Equally important is the human dimension. The leaders of all sectors of our society are trained in our National Defence Courses, creating networks that are essential for effective crisis response, including the protection of civilians. Inclusive exercises—conducted regularly at national, regional, and local levels—bring together authorities, businesses, NGOs, and citizens to rehearse scenarios involving civil protection in urban settings. These exercises ensure that coordination is not theoretical but operational.

On the military side, Finland applies rigorous precautions in planning and conducting operations. Targeting processes assess potential collateral damage, including humanitarian impacts, and impose restrictions accordingly. Safety distances and prohibited zones are enforced to protect civilian areas. After hostilities, explosive remnants are cleared and stored safely, and civilians are actively informed about risks and movement restrictions. Training in the rules of war is integrated into conscript and professional military education, complemented by specialized courses organized with the Finnish Red Cross.

These measures reflect our commitment to the Declaration: recognizing the devastating humanitarian consequences of explosive weapons in populated areas and reaffirming full compliance with International Humanitarian Law. They also demonstrate that legal obligations must be translated into practical action—through infrastructure, preparedness, and inclusive cooperation.

Finland will continue to share its experiences and learn from others. Together, by combining legal principles with operational readiness and societal resilience, we can ensure that the protection of civilians remains at the heart of our collective security efforts.

Thank you.