

Oslo EWIPA Conference, 23 April 2024

Opening remarks

Ambassador White

Excellencies

Distinguished Guests

Ladies and Gentlemen

- *I would like to thank the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Norway for hosting us and for organising the first international follow-up conference to the adoption of the Political Declaration on EWIPA.*
- *This Conference provides us with a critical opportunity to reflect on progress and challenges in implementing and universalizing the Declaration, and, to discuss its importance in light of ongoing conflicts.*
- *Ireland was honoured to have played a role in the development and endorsement of this important document.*
- *We were not operating in a vacuum. Ireland built upon the work of others over a number of years – the EWIPA talks series, lead by Germany, the UNGA 1st Committee Joint Statement, regional conferences in Maputo in 2017 and Santiago in 2019, the Vienna International Conference; the robust body of research by UNIDIR and others; the efforts of civil society notably through Article 36 and iNEW, and of course the landmark ICRC report launched in January 2022 which provided evidence of the devastating humanitarian harm of EWIPA as well as policy recommendations.*

- *In short, this Declaration is the result of years of effort to raise awareness about the impact of the use of explosive weapons in populated areas and of the need for States to adopt policies and practices aimed at protecting civilians during and after conflict.*
- *Ultimately, our job – Ireland’s job - in championing this cause, was to consolidate the then growing international consensus into a substantive collective agreement and through that, to provide a platform from which to push forward collective action.*
- *What the Declaration does then is to recognise the significant humanitarian issues associated with EWIPA; acknowledge there is a problem to be addressed; and it sets out clear, forward-looking actions to address those issues.*
- *These actions – these commitments - include a series of practical measures for all parties to armed conflict; a commitment to strengthen international cooperation and assistance with respect to the identification, development and exchange of good practices to enhance the protection of civilians; measures to facilitate the exchange of technical and tactical expertise as well as improved data collection. And it recognises the challenges posed by Non-State Armed Groups and the tactics they deploy.*
- *These are clear, operational commitments. They underpin the political message of the Declaration with practical actions to drive effective change.*

Ladies and Gentlemen

- *Challenging times require creative and ambitious solutions. With this Declaration we send a strong signal that multilateralism matters; that it remains a powerful force for positive change in our connected world.*

- *This is important: The need to address this issue has never been more pressing. We have heard moving testimony here this morning. We are witnessing in real time the devastating consequences of the widespread use of explosive weapons in densely populated areas, with unprecedented consequences.*
- *The appalling scenes in Ukraine, Gaza and elsewhere bring home the gravity and urgency of this issue. They remind us of our collective responsibility to do everything we can as an international community to reinforce global norms and address the causes of human suffering.*
- *That unconscionable suffering offers a stark reminder of what brought us together to agree the Declaration. It should – it must – strengthen our resolve to address the impact of EWIPA with the urgency it deserves.*

Ladies and Gentlemen

- *The creation of the Declaration drew on a wide variety of expertise - disarmament, humanitarian, military and human rights fields all fed into the process. These same disciplines are key to its implementation.*
- *More broadly, the work of implementation will require long-term cooperation among and between States, International Organisations and Civil Society.*

- *The work leading to the Declaration; the endorsement of the Declaration at the Dublin Conference; the follow-up Conference in Oslo, and looking beyond this to our next meeting in Costa Rica – is all part of an ongoing process. The Conference in Dublin was neither a start nor an end to our work, but rather a staging post.*
- *And today, in Oslo, we are afforded an opportunity to recommit to what we agreed to almost one and a half years ago. We can and should do no less. We owe it to the countless victims, to those suffering the ongoing consequences today, and those who have lost their lives as a result of the use of Explosive Weapons in Populated Areas.*

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