Statement for session 3 on harm reduction and protection through data collection and sharing on behalf of Insecurity Insight

The 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 José, Costa Rica, November 2025
Delivered by Ms. Drew East

Thank you, Chair,

My name is Drew East, and I am speaking on behalf of Insecurity Insight.

We collect and analyse data on civilian harm, with a particular focus on the reverberating effects that follow from damage to vital civilian infrastructure. Our work supports advocacy and responsible military planning grounded in international humanitarian law (IHL) by identifying preventable patterns of harm.

Over the past decade, in partnership with the United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research (UNIDIR), we have developed methods to document not only the direct impact of explosive weapons but also the indirect, longer-term effects that spread across communities. These reverberating effects destroy essential systems, disrupt daily life, and create high reconstruction costs long after fighting has stopped.

In recent years, we have expanded this work through open-source monitoring, using Artificial Intelligence (AI) to help identify relevant information while keeping human analysts fully in control. Through this approach, we have documented more than 900 incidents in markets, over 1,000 affecting farmland, more than 5,500 hindering access to health care, and over 2,600 affecting education.

These incidents are not isolated. Their consequences ripple through societies for weeks, months, and often years.

- A single shell hitting a water pipe can cut off supply to an entire district, affecting households, agriculture, and hospitals.
- Explosive remnants can contaminate soil, reducing crop yields and deepening food insecurity.
- Damage to water and sanitation systems undermines hygiene in hospitals and can trigger diseases like cholera.
- Landmines laid on roads make daily travel, including children's journeys to school, dangerous or impossible.
- Explosive weapons also block the movement of food and medicine: sea mines halt grain shipments, bombed warehouses strand essential supplies, and repeated strikes on roads prevent ambulances from reaching the wounded.

Each incident weakens the systems people rely on for survival.

For Insecurity Insight, effective monitoring of explosive weapons must do three things:

- Identify trends through systematic daily tracking;
- Collate incidents to understand how they combine to damage critical infrastructure; and
- Connect system failures back to people's lived experiences, in partnership with humanitarian responders.

But data alone is not enough. This information must actively inform advocacy and military decision-making. Assessments of cascading impacts are essential during both pre-target planning and post-battle analysis. Because explosive weapons cause wide-ranging reverberating effects, precaution cannot focus only on immediate casualties. It must also consider long-term harm to the systems that provide food, water, health care, and safety.

I would like to close by underscoring that evidence is essential to understanding patterns of explosive-weapon use. If we can document these patterns, we can predict them. And if we can predict them, we can prevent them. Investing in strong methods and timely information is an investment in early action, prevention, and precaution. It prevents harm, reduces the cost of response and reconstruction, and most importantly protects lives.

Thank you.