



Oslo EWIPA Conference, 23 April 2024

Closing Speech by Anne Beathe Tvinnereim

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Ladies and gentlemen, dear colleagues, friends and partners,

Every time a civilian is injured, displaced, or killed by explosive weapons, lives and futures are changed forever. Every time a school, hospital, water treatment plant or other civilian infrastructure is hit by explosives, we are one step further away from achieving the Sustainable Development Goals. A city in ruins will affect the community for generations.

During this conference we have learned more about what happens when cities and other populated areas become battlegrounds. We have learned about the immediate effects; death, injury, and mental trauma. About how civilians suffer disproportionately. We have learned about the need for protection and immediate humanitarian support to save lives, alleviate suffering and preserve human dignity.

The effects of explosive weapons can last for generations. The graffiti painting outside this conference hall is a reminder of exactly this point. And children are among those most affected. If schools are in ruins, it will affect children's education for years. If hospitals are destroyed, providing life-saving healthcare is difficult. If power plants or water facilities are hit by explosives, there will be no electricity, no clean water. And the effects tend to get more severe over time if the conflict continues and services are not restored or rebuilt.

All this leads to an inevitable conclusion: If we are to stand any chance of achieving the Sustainable Development Goals by 2030, we *must* address how explosive weapons are used in populated areas.

And that is exactly what we are doing through the EWIPA Declaration. This political statement represents both an acknowledgement of the humanitarian suffering caused by the use of these weapons and a commitment to take action to prevent and mitigate the consequences.



It gives me hope that 87 states have now endorsed the declaration. I am delighted that Jordan, North Macedonia, Montenegro, and Kosovo have joined the group of endorsing states since the Conference in Dublin in 2022.

Norway will continue to advocate for even more states to join the declaration. We will do so in collaboration with Ireland and Costa Rica. I would like to profoundly thank Costa Rica for stepping up to host the next EWIPA Conference in 2025. I would also like to recognize Ireland's continued leadership in advancing this agenda, and UNODA's leading role in helping organize the work of the Declaration. I encourage all of you to join us in advocating for the universalization of the declaration.

Now we must translate commitments into actions. And that is what this conference has been about. We have heard examples of good policies and practices. We have heard strong testimonies from affected communities and survivors. And we have discussed how we can best provide effective assistance. To rebuild, to heal and to break the cycle of destruction and harm.

As we end this conference, let us keep three things in mind:

First. Civilians are not targets. We must do more to protect them when cities and other populated areas become theaters of war.

Second. Armed conflict always causes human suffering and material damage. But for civilians and their futures - *how wars are fought matters*. What types of weapons are used matters. How they are used matters. Implementing the EWIPA Declaration can improve the conduct of military operations. It can strengthen compliance with International Humanitarian Law. It can save lives and prevent suffering.

Third. The declaration also commits us to assist affected communities. This means adapting the humanitarian response to meet the needs of affected communities. It means looking for opportunities for early recovery to restore essential infrastructure and services. And ensuring long term inclusion and assistance to victims. Over the past years the global humanitarian needs have increased dramatically and much more than the financing available to meet them. Norway for its part will continue to prioritise funding humanitarian response.

To address the needs arising from the use of explosive weapons in populated areas, we need a comprehensive approach where humanitarian assistance, development and peace and reconciliation efforts all play a vital role in meeting the needs of affected communities. This declaration is an important tool in this regard.



**EXPLOSIVE
WEAPONS
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Finally, a few words on partnerships. Survivors and advocates from civil society have been essential to the development of the EWIPA Declaration. This conference has gathered representatives from over 90 states, survivors of wars, the UN, regional organizations, the Red Cross/Red Crescent Movement, and a large number of civil society organizations. The discussions have been held in a spirit of mutual learning and cooperation. We must continue to nurture these partnerships. As we continue the work to strengthen the protection of civilians by implementing the EWIPA Declaration, each and every participant has a vital role to play.

Thank you.