



**2025 International Conference on the Political
Declaration on Explosive Weapons in Populated
Areas**

General Statement

19 November 2025

Time Limit: 3 minutes

Excellencies, colleagues,

New Zealand commends Costa Rica for its leadership and warm hospitality, and is honoured to participate in this Conference.

The consequences of the use of explosive weapons in populated areas are acute and well-documented, with effects on civilians that reverberate in a range of direct and indirect ways. Civilians are frequently killed and maimed at the time that explosive weapons are used. Downstream, effects such as destruction of infrastructure including water, power and sanitation, disruption to services on which people depend, and displacement of communities, can last long after the fighting ends – for years or even decades. This undermines recovery, development, and sustainable peace.

Recognising this, New Zealand was a member of the Core Group that developed the EWIPA Declaration, to work to protect civilians in these situations in armed conflict.

Regrettably, this is a need that has only sharpened in recent years. Armed conflicts continue to rage around the world – frequently in urban areas – and civilian casualties are surging. We are observing retreats from international humanitarian law and humanitarian disarmament agreements, instruments that were painstakingly negotiated to provide additional protections for civilians from the worst effects of conflict.

Political initiatives, such as the EWIPA Declaration, the Declaration for the Protection of Humanitarian Personnel, and the ICRC's Global Initiative to Galvanise Political Commitment to IHL, are important to try to stem these concerning trends. As well as highlighting practical steps and safeguards to minimise harm, these initiatives raise awareness and provide a platform to support parties to armed conflicts to consider how they meet their IHL obligations. The determination to come together and discuss how we can all do better is more important now than ever, in an increasingly fragmented world.

For New Zealand, this conference is an opportunity for the global community to share our experiences, listen to and learn from survivors, and chart a path forward for the continued implementation and universalisation of the Declaration. New Zealand looks forward to the exchange of experiences during the panel discussions.

We encourage those who have not yet endorsed the Declaration to do so, and to join us in reaffirming our commitments to the protection of civilians.

Finally, we underscore that there is a genuine and serious need to ensure respect for international humanitarian law. The Political Declaration on EWIPA is an invaluable tool for achieving this, which we must use to its full potential.

Thank you.