



**Statement by
the Republic of Slovenia
at the**

2nd International Conference of the EWIPA Declaration – Session 3

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Slovenia is pleased to contribute to this important discussion on harm reduction and civilian protection, including through strengthened data collection and information-sharing. We are particularly glad to share insights from our engagement in the *Global Alliance to Spare Water from Armed Conflicts*.

Slovenia recalls that freshwater bodies and water services are, as a rule, protected civilian objects under international humanitarian law. The principles of distinction, proportionality and precaution must guide all military planning and operations. Crucially, these assessments must take into account reasonably foreseeable indirect or reverberating effects – the cascading humanitarian and environmental consequences that follow the initial use of explosive weapons. Damage to water networks can trigger waterborne disease, displacement, environmental degradation and long-term harm that is less visible yet often more devastating.

Slovenia is proud to have co-launched with other partners the *Global Alliance to Spare Water from Armed Conflict* in 2024, promoting the integration of water expertise, environmental science and humanitarian principles, including into military planning. The Alliance stresses that water systems must be understood not only as infrastructure, but as complex, interdependent ecosystems. In November, together with Switzerland and the Geneva Water Hub, Slovenia will host a workshop dedicated to operationalizing these principles in practice. We believe it will support states in navigating the legal, humanitarian and technical challenges associated with safeguarding water systems during armed conflict.

The workshop will address the increasing complexity of dual-use water systems, among other issues. Slovenia wishes to emphasise that the term 'dual-use' is not defined in international humanitarian law. Civilian infrastructure does not lose its protected status simply because it could also support a military function. Instead, such situations call for strengthened analysis, enhanced sectoral expertise and constructive dialogue among military planners, engineers, environmental specialists and water authorities.

Looking ahead, Slovenia highlights three priorities for practical progress:

1. **Training and integration of norms** – States must invest in continuous training on IHL protections for civilian infrastructure, embedding these principles into doctrine, rules of engagement and operational practice.
2. **Strengthening multidisciplinary planning** – Legal advisers, engineers, water specialists and public-health experts should be systematically involved in military planning to improve civilian-harm assessments and strengthen operational decision-making.
3. **Improved data collection and sharing** – Reliable information on the vulnerability of essential services, and on civilian impacts, is vital for early warning, risk mitigation and accountability. Enhanced cooperation between militaries, civilian authorities and humanitarian actors is essential to closing existing data gaps.

Finally, Slovenia underscores the economic and peacebuilding imperative of protecting critical civilian infrastructure. Supported by data, preventing damage is far more cost-effective than reconstruction, and it contributes directly to long-term stability.