

Political Declaration on Strengthening the Protection of Civilians from the Humanitarian Consequences Arising from the Use of Explosive Weapons in Populated Areas

First Follow-up Conference

Oslo, Norway, 23 April 2024

Closing Statement UNODA

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Excellencies, dear colleagues,

Allow me first to join the many speakers before me in commending Norway for its stewardship in taking on this crucial process and beyond that the Troika for its role in the promotion of the Declaration and process.

And having the benefit of being among the last speakers I also have the privilege to congratulate you on successfully holding the Declaration's first follow up conference.

Throughout the day today what has resonated through the presentations, the statements, and the conversations in between is the hope attached to this declaration and the potential for what it can achieve. What also resonated is the sense of urgency to ensure that the declaration is implemented fully and ambitiously.

This must remain a key priority for the international community at large, but in particular for the endorsing States. We heard it time and again, simply endorsing is not enough. It must be followed up with concrete action that aim to avoid civilian harm.

The United Nations has continuously stressed that States must unequivocally prioritize the safety and dignity of human lives and called to reduce the human cost of weapons.

Our closing session is aimed to look at the way ahead and, in my case, the concrete role that the UN Office for Disarmament will play in that.

But in order to look ahead we must bear in mind the path that led us here. For this I want to acknowledge the extensive work that has been done by Ireland in bringing this declaration to fruition, by Norway in taking in on, but also the relentless efforts of civil society and International Organizations.

Getting to where we are today has been a truly collective effort and must remain one.

And in order to strengthen this multidimensional and multifaceted approach and pull all these efforts together UNODA, through funding provided by Germany, Ireland and Norway, has taken on a leading support and coordination role for the declaration, as has also been recognized in the outcome statement by the Troika.

The aim of this is to ensure long term visibility of, and support to, the Declaration. To institutionalize and strengthen the process, including by acting as the center point of knowledge and activities and through this to ensure commonality of efforts and complementary approaches.

In practical terms this means:

- Assisting with the substantive and organizational work associated to this declaration.
- Acting as a cross sectoral coordination entity among endorsing States including their political leadership and armed forces, international, regional and civil society organizations as well as UN entities and agencies with a view to build a roadmap for the path ahead.
- Facilitating capacity building through technical, operational and policy exchanges at the international, but importantly also the regional and sub regional level.
- Promoting universalization and beyond this bringing the declaration and the commitments it contains to a cross cutting arena of discussions to link it to existing obligations and to use it as a cross cutting tool.
- Providing implementation support and facilitating norm-setting that puts human beings back at the center of our efforts.

UNODA seeks to enhance the effectiveness of the political declaration, to engage and bring all relevant actors to the table, and to ensure long term institutional memory.

This involvement is not only vital for the success of the declaration but also for the advancement of disarmament and arms control and for global peace and security more broadly.

We heard it today and at yesterday's Protection Forum: this Declaration is not an answer in itself.

It is a tool with the potential for tremendous impact in the long run.

And we are here to help you ensure that this potential is being met.