

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

Statement by the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland

19 November 2025

The United Kingdom is proud to be an endorsing State to the Political Declaration and we welcome the progress since the last Conference, including endorsements from Honduras and Thailand. We express appreciation to Costa Rica for hosting and look forward to continuing dialogue on strengthening the Declaration's implementation and universalisation.

Two years on, explosive weapons continue to be used in populated areas with abandon in Sudan, Ukraine, Myanmar and elsewhere. In Gaza, while optimistic about the ceasefire, we cannot ignore the significant work that will be needed to ensure the renewed safety of the civilian population.

Explosive weapons also remain a leading threat to children in armed conflict, killing and maiming and severely affecting access to essential services like healthcare, education and clean water. States must do more to address the impact of explosive weapons on children.

The UK is co-chair of the International Contact Group on Civilian Harm Mitigation and Response, and we were pleased to be able to contribute our knowledge and expertise to several military workshops over the past year, including those hosted by the ICRC and Article 36. The outputs from these events will be important in supporting states to implement the commitments in the Declaration.

Fundamental to our approach to Defence has been the adherence to International Humanitarian Law and the Law of Armed Conflict. Complementing these critical legal frameworks is our policy on Human Security in Defence, that directs our forces to incorporate analysis of the civilian environment into our strategies, plans and operations. We continue to have comprehensive training in place at all levels of our Armed Forces and this is enhanced with specific training for those being deployed on operations and those in targeting roles. The UK sets clear policy and directives on Targeting and Rules of Engagement and ensures compliance to these standards. We use our intelligence organisations and work with allies, partners and NGOs to identify and protect specific entities. Moreover, our military planners consider the potential for our effects to have second/third order effects that, through damage to civilian infrastructure, can negatively impact civilian populations after a conflict period.

We remain committed to transparency in our actions, and to learn through our experiences in conflict, capturing the lessons identified to inform future action.

The exchange of knowledge, expertise, and good practice will result in tangible improvements to the protection of civilians. Political and military officials both need to engage as part of this process to ensure those tasked with implementing and operationalising our commitments can contribute to progress.

Let me once again thank Costa Rica for hosting this conference and reaffirm the UK's support and commitment to the implementation of the EWIPA Declaration.