

**The Group of African States Draft Statement**

**At the Informal Consultations on the Political Declaration on EWIPA**

**Geneva, 10<sup>th</sup> February 2020**

**Mr. Chairman,**

The Group of African States wishes to start by thanking Ireland for convening the 2<sup>nd</sup> informal consultations on Protecting Civilians in Urban Warfare.

We also thank them for the compilation of elements for the Political Declaration, drawn from various contributions made in the 1<sup>st</sup> informal consultations on the subject matter, last November.

**Mr. Chairman**

The Group of African States views these consultations, and I quote the Press Statement of the Peace and Security Council ref.PSC/PR/BR.(DCCCLIX), of 17<sup>th</sup> July 2019 “... within the framework of the African Union Master Roadmap of Practical Steps to Silence the Guns in Africa by the year 2020, to intensify efforts to prevent and end conflicts in Africa ...”, end quote.

Indeed, the Niamey Extraordinary Summit has decided that the 2020 theme of the African Union is *silencing the guns*.

These efforts seek to rid the Continent of violent conflicts where, inter alia, explosive weapons with wide area effects are used in populated areas, with appalling civilian casualties.

**Mr. Chairman,**

While welcoming the document on the elements for the Political Declaration, which feature some aspects of the aforementioned African Union Peace and Security Council Press Statement, the African Group would like the Political Declaration to clearly spell out substantive political commitments, on the avoidance of the use of EWIPA, whenever there is a potential of indiscriminate and disproportionate targeting of civilians, with reverberating effects on the long run.

The Political Declaration should be actionable, measurable, result – based; with action-oriented commitments that strengthen accountability and combat impunity.

It is our view, that the political commitments should also *emphasize the deep and the long – term impact of armed conflicts on civilian objects, particularly as a result of the use of explosive weapons with wide-area effects, which impedes the delivery of humanitarian assistance, hinder the return of refugees and displaced persons, increases the cost of recovery and reconstruction, and undermines overall peace building efforts.*

Political commitments *on doing everything feasible to verify that objectives to be attacked are neither civilians, nor civilian objects; are not subject to special protection; and to take all feasible precaution and choice of warfare means and methods,* should also feature in the Declaration.

Furthermore, the Group of African States proposes the insertion of commitments *on building capacity and integrate measures to address the challenges of urban warfare into military doctrine at the tactical, operational and strategic levels.*

The Group of African States deems important the insertion of political commitment on the *prevention of diversion of arms, ammunition and commercial material used in the development of improvised explosive devices, for **diversion** as proved to be one of the main supply sources to non- states armed groups, including terrorists and criminal actors.*

Finally, international, regional and sub regional best practices on the protection of civilians, like the Kigali Principles on the matter and the Safe Schools Declaration, should be recognized in the preamble section of the Political Declaration.

We thank you