



Open consultation on developing a political declaration on explosive weapons in populated areas

Statement on Victim Assistance

*By Alma Taslidžan Al-Osta, Humanity&Inclusion
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Thank you Ambassador.

Speaking on behalf of Humanity & Inclusion, also known as Handicap International, an international organisation that works with and for victim of explosive weapons in more than 20 conflict affected countries, I believe that we have the right to raise a point that we believe never receives enough attention, and that is victim assistance.

It is true, indeed, that it is very challenging to address the needs of victims of explosive weapons, as we are talking about a wide group of people affected by this problem that need immediate, as well as long term assistance. As the people should be a centre of our discussion, and their protection should be a core of our work, we in HI, are pleased to hear so many states supporting the development of political declaration. However, if this political declaration ONLY restates the compliance with IHL and doesn't provide very concrete measures to protect civilians in urban warfare and secure the right instruments to address the needs of victims of explosive weapons, unfortunately we do not see its impact in addressing the harm cause by these weapons.

Avoiding to repeat what was already said in INEW's intervention, which we in HI support, I would like to highlight that the assistance to victims should build on internationally recognised victim assistance standards, and reinforce the principle of non-discrimination, where people critically injured by explosive weapons, survivors, the families of those killed and injured, and affected communities from all impacted areas have the right to receive assistance, and also to ensure that the basic needs of survivors are met in a timely manner, including with regards to safety, protection, shelter, food, water, hygiene and sanitation. In addition, there is a need for safe and timely access to mainstream, personal support and disability-specific services, including emergency and long-term medical care, rehabilitation, education, work, employment, social protection and social inclusion.

The declaration should also support practical protection measures, promote unimpeded access to inclusive principled humanitarian aid to ensure continuity of services and provision of assistance to affected population.

Ambassador, the phenomenon under discussion here is not new – use of explosive weapons with wide area effects and the patter of humanitarian harm, have been ongoing issues of concern. Again, the fact that there is a large number of victims and a widespread pattern of destruction is not a justification for ignoring or denying people their rights and needs, but rather should be driver of the urgency of addressing this problem.

Therefore we request a specific agenda item on victim assistance for the next round of negotiations on the political declaration. We in Humanity&Inclusion are willing to provide all the necessary data and evidence that standalone commitment on victim assistance is an urgent obligation and it would thus align the political declaration to the highest standard on victim assistance as already defined by existing humanitarian disarmament treaties and in line with the urgent humanitarian need.

Thank you.

Ends.