



Permanent Mission of Italy  
UN - Geneva

## **Protecting Civilians in Urban Warfare**

**towards a political declaration to address the humanitarian harm  
arising from the use of explosive weapons in populated areas**

**Consultations organized by Ireland**

*Geneva, 18 November 2019*

**Statement by Amb. Gianfranco Incarnato,  
Permanent Representative of Italy to the Conference on Disarmament**

Mister Ambassador, Dear Michael,

Let me first thank you and the whole Irish team for organizing these consultations and for the excellent concept note you have circulated. In line with our participation in the Vienna Conference of last October, we highly appreciate the opportunity to work together on a political declaration to address the humanitarian harm arising from the use of explosive weapons in populated areas.

Italy shares the deep concern of the International Community on the extremely serious and extensive humanitarian impact of EWIPAs. Such impacts are extensive, and include both direct damage, in the form of death and injury, and indirect and long-term effects relating to the destruction of essential infrastructure, cultural heritage, loss of services, obstacles to humanitarian intervention, high costs of reconstruction and recovery, displacement and denial of return.

We believe that a political declaration can reinforce the collective commitment to address civilian harm in urban warfare, recognizing these effects and reaffirming that the cardinal rules and principles of International Humanitarian Law must be complied with in all circumstances and by all parties of a conflict.

We consider that the legal framework is clear and that the crux of the matter is to implement it in the challenging dynamics of current conflicts. This relates in particular to the principles of distinction, necessity, proportionality and precaution.

In the context of the increasing relevance of population-centric warfare and considering the growing role of non-state actors, it is important to adapt policies, doctrines, and military tactics to the challenges posed by conducting military operations in populated areas, so to properly take into account civilian vulnerabilities.

Practical measures concerning battle damage assessments, as well as targeting and Rules of Engagement, among others, along with the strict adherence to the rules and principles of IHL are essential in order to minimize the effects on populations from a political, economic, social, cultural and demographic point of view. Best practices at international level as well as the importance of cooperation and exchange of expertise should therefore be reflected in the Political declaration.

To conclude, let me stress once again the importance of strengthening our common action for protecting civilians in armed conflict, especially in urban warfare, and the role of a political declaration. We are willing to engage in this process and welcome all valuable contribution in this direction.

Thank you for your attention.