

Consultations on the Elements of a Political Declaration to address the Harm Arising from the Use of Explosive Weapons in Populated Areas

Statement on Section 1: Identifying the problem and challenges

**Geneva, 10 February 2020
Delivered by Amanda Brydon**

Thank you Chair. We too welcome the leadership of Ireland in these consultations and in the drafting of this solid Elements Paper

Working on the frontlines of conflict, Save the Children staff are daily witnesses to the impact explosive weapons with wide area effects have when used in populated areas.

As a member of INEW, we support the recommendations submitted by the Network including the calls for the declaration to include a commitment to avoid the use of explosive weapons with wide area effect in populated areas and in strengthening language around victim assistance.

In this intervention, we wish to reinforce the recognition that the Elements Paper is currently insufficient in recognising the issue of reverberating effects and touch on the differing impacts of explosive weapons.

At 1.2, the Elements Paper notes how the civilian population can be exposed to severe and long-lasting harm as a result of the use of explosive weapons with wide area effect, including from the destruction of housing, schools, and hospitals. However, a Declaration text could be strengthened to better reflect the complex and cumulative nature of the impact and explicitly reference the reverberating effects of the use of explosive weapons, outlining the severe humanitarian implications due to the interconnected nature of infrastructure and services. It is also important for a text to recognise the setbacks such impacts have on development and the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals.

It is also important for section 1 of the Political Declaration to recognise that men, women, girls and boys will experience the impacts of explosive weapons differently and steps to address harm must recognise and take account of these.

While recognising the impacts on civilians more generally, we know that children are disproportionately affected by the impacts of explosive weapons. In direct effects, we know that children with blast injuries are more likely than adults to die and evidence suggests that head and facial trauma is more common in children than in adults.

It is crucial to better understand and take account of these differences if we are to be truly effective in addressing the harm caused by explosive weapons. We recommend for 1.6 to drop 'potential' and to add in language that supports research into impacts through age, gender and ability lenses.

Statement on Section 4: Principled Humanitarian Assistance

Geneva, 10 February 2020

Thank you Chair.

We welcome the inclusion of text seeking to urge to all parties to armed conflict to facilitate rapid and unimpeded passage for humanitarian relief to civilian populations in need; however, we strongly recommend a strengthening of language in 4.4 and also to the suggestions set out in 4.6 in encouraging cooperation with local stakeholders.

In a world of increasingly complex conflicts and protracted humanitarian crisis, humanitarian organisations like Save the Children are facing a remarkable shrinking of the humanitarian space in which to deliver assistance in line with core humanitarian principles of humanity, neutrality impartiality and operational independence.

In conflicts where explosive weapons are used in populated areas, civilians, including children are often in dire need of humanitarian assistance. Recognising this right to effective assistance, including protection, requires an operating environment that is conducive to the regular and continued deployment of staff and supplies, and managed in accordance with humanitarian principles.

As such, we recommend amending the language in 4.4 to read:

Ensure all parties to armed conflict allow and facilitate rapid unimpeded passage for principled humanitarian action to civilian populations in need and the safeguarding of the humanitarian space.

For 4.6 we suggest this paragraph be retained, but strengthened in line with language outlined in other sections so as to:

~~Encourage~~ **Strengthen** cooperation with local stakeholders, civil society experts, and humanitarian organisations specialised in this field;