



PO Box 4668 Postal Station E Ottawa ON K1S 5H8 CANADA
tél: +1.613.241.3777 fax: +1.613.244.3410 info@minesactioncanada.org www.minesactioncanada.org

Time for Decisive Action:

Mines Action Canada's comments on the March 2022 draft political declaration text

Mines Action Canada (MAC) welcomes the Government of Ireland's work on the revised draft political declaration on the use of explosive weapons in populated areas (EWIPA), circulated by the government of Ireland in March 2022. The evidence is clear that the use of explosive weapons in populated areas causes unacceptable harm to civilians and recent world events have brought the reality of that harm on to television and cell phone screens around the world.

As a member of the International Network on Explosive Weapons (INEW), Mines Action Canada fully supports the paper submitted by INEW. In an organizational capacity, MAC submits the following recommendations.

MAC recognizes a number of improvements in the draft declaration over the 2021 text including replacing conditional language about how explosive weapons "can" cause harm with clear language stating the harm caused in line with evidence from the field. The evidence shows that when explosive weapons are used in populated areas, civilian harm will result so we welcome the changes in the text to recognize that reality.

The multiple references to data collection are welcomed but MAC encourages all states to ensure that activities related to data collection are focused on humanitarian concerns and not implemented through the military lens of battle damage assessments. In addition to those general comments, MAC has specific comments on five paragraphs of the draft text.

Paragraph 1.2 Articulating the harm caused by explosive weapons use in populated areas is a key part of the political declaration. A direct mention of the gendered impacts of EWIPA would be welcome in addition to the additions suggested by INEW.

Paragraph 1.7bis Including survivor voices and experiences is crucial to ensuring the policies guided by the political declaration actually meet the needs they intend to address. The word empower should be deleted as survivors, like all people, have power, however, the structures of the international system and the impacts of conflict limit their ability to exercise that power. States should focus on creating space for survivors to use their existing power. This paragraph should also recognize the gendered impacts of EWIPA rather than commit to research on the gendered impacts.

Paragraph 3.3 This paragraph should tilt against the use of EWIPA. States should commit to avoiding the use of explosive weapons in populated areas. The phrase "when the effects may be expected to extend beyond a military target" limits the scope of the paragraph and the declaration and should be deleted.

Paragraph 3.5 This paragraph should also reference explosive ordnance risk education in addition to marking and clearance. Risk education does not need to wait until the end of active hostilities. The phrase explosive remnants of war should be replaced with explosive ordnance. .

Paragraph 4.4 MAC appreciates the stronger language on victim assistance and encourages all states to support robust victim assistance provisions, however, more detail on what victim assistance entails would be helpful.

As mentioned above, Mines Action Canada strongly supports the submission made by INEW and has drafted this submission to highlight some key points based on our long experience working in humanitarian disarmament. As the world faces widespread use of explosive weapons in populated areas in conflicts on three continents, this is the time for decisive action. We urge states to be ambitious and ensure that this political declaration sets high standards for behaviour in order to protect civilians during armed conflict and post-conflict.