

EWIPA – Political declaration

Key principles:

- Recognise the acute challenges pertaining to the increasing urbanisation of conflicts including the growing role of non-state actors in incidents of civilian harm – particularly through the widespread and indiscriminate use of improvised explosive devices;
- Reaffirm unconditional support and call for universal adherence and full implementation of the rules of the IHL as well as related UNSC Resolutions;
- Recall that international humanitarian law sets down fundamental principles - in particular the principles of distinction, necessity, precaution and proportionality - which would, if universally respected, efficiently minimise civilian loss, injury to civilians and damage to civilian objects caused by urban warfare in the long term. Underline that existing IHL obligations provide a sufficient framework to provide for the protection of civilians in urban areas.
- Underline that the effective implementation of IHL principles in populated areas can be achieved through a comprehensive approach that encompasses appropriate representation in military doctrines, strategic directives, tactical instructions, rules of engagement, education, training and exercises of armed forces as well as thorough testing and documentation of new weapons, means and methods of warfare before fielding.
- Reflect commitment to continuously review and adapt doctrines, practices and equipment and implement tangible measures aimed at ensuring controlled use of force in densely populated areas, including:
 - Ensuring a clear organisation of the chain of command, with permissions and authorities clearly delineated to ensure accountability at the necessary levels;
 - Establishing a robust targeting process and implementing strict rules of engagement to take into account the presence of the civilian population and the need to preserve essential infrastructure;
 - Enhancing and ensuring adequate training on IHL and the law of armed conflict amongst troops – particularly in pre-deployment training ahead of deployed operations.
- Recognise the requirement to continuously monitor, review and adapt practical measures to reduce and mitigate risk to civilians through analysis of operational lessons and experience. The declaration should reflect a commitment to share good practices and to strengthen cooperation and assistance between States in order to identify potential additional measures and principles that reflect their specific operational capabilities, needs and circumstances.
- Make a clear distinction between the legitimate use of EWIPA in specific conflict situations and indiscriminate use that breaches IHL. The declaration should avoid the assertion or implication that any use of EWIPA is contrary to IHL, regardless of the prevailing operational circumstances, which should be assessed on a case-by-case basis and in the context of IHL principles and rules.

Additionally, the declaration should:

- Urge States to ratify the Additional Protocols to the Geneva Conventions as well as the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons and its five Protocols, the Convention on Cluster Munitions and the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention;
- Condemn the use of improvised explosive devices, the use of civilians as human shields, the coercion of civilians to remain proximate to military objectives in order to deter attacks on such objectives and the location of military objectives within or near densely populated areas for the same purpose. It should be noted that there will be operational circumstances in which militaries will need to work amongst the civilian population such as, *inter alia*, peace support operations and counter-insurgencies.
- Encourage states to take into consideration post-conflict requirements, notably stabilisation and reconstruction phases, at the outset of operations to protect populations from the risks posed by explosive remnants of war and anticipate the civilian population's post-conflict requirements such as physical security, access to essential services and education.
- Recognise that under many circumstances, failure to apply legitimate force in the pursuit of military objectives may have serious humanitarian consequences, such as the prolongation of serious human rights abuses by states or non-state groups that do not recognise international norms of behaviour in conflict.
- Strengthen cooperation and exchange of technical and tactical expertise between armed forces.
- Encourage cooperation with local institutions, civil society experts, United Nations agencies and humanitarian organisations specialised in this field.