

CCW: 2019 MEETING OF HIGH CONTRACTING PARTIES
NEW ZEALAND STATEMENT ON EXPLOSIVE WEAPONS IN POPULATED AREAS

Mr Chair,

New Zealand was pleased to engage last year in substantive discussions under this agenda item on the important issue of explosive weapons in populated areas (EWIPA). We welcomed the framing of those discussions by the working paper put forward by Germany and agreed with its emphasis that the driver for action on EWIPA will continue to be the need to enhance compliance with existing International Humanitarian Law. We look forward to digesting the new working paper submitted by Germany this year.

We are disappointed that efforts to address the issue of the immediate and long-term harm caused to civilians by the use of explosive weapons in populated areas within the CCW framework have, so far, proved unsuccessful. There is no agenda item on this issue this year, let alone the “informal working group on EWIPA” that was proposed in Germany’s working paper and which received broad support last year.

For some time now New Zealand has supported efforts to address the humanitarian harm caused by the use of explosive weapons in populated areas in a range of fora. In particular, as part of the EWIPA Core Group and as a supporter of the action item on this issue in the UNSG’s Agenda for Disarmament, we have advocated for the elaboration of a political declaration on this issue. It is clear to us that the CCW is not the appropriate place to negotiate a political declaration, but we hope that it might be able to play a supporting role during or after the negotiations, which are set to begin next week.

Next week’s open consultations follow a number of key milestones that have been achieved around the world in recent years and months. Foremost among these milestones, the First Global Conference on the Protection of Civilians in Urban Warfare was held in Vienna in October. This attracted participation by more than 500 people – including representatives of 133 states, UN entities, international organisations and civil society. Even more recently, over 70 States supported a joint statement led by Ireland on EWIPA during this year’s First Committee. We expect that next week’s open consultations will build on the broad support that has been expressed for the development of a political

declaration and we look forward to participating actively to this end together with other interested delegations. We see a clear need to act on the momentum that is building around EWIPA and to strive for outcomes that will make a real difference to the protection of civilians caught in conflict.

For our part, New Zealand will continue to support efforts outside this body, in particular the elaboration of a political declaration, as well as the continued discussion of EWIPA within the CCW, as appropriate. We welcome the opportunity to discuss this important issue within the CCW, which is one of a number of appropriate fora in which to consider EWIPA – because its deals with weapons that are considered to, inter alia, affect civilians indiscriminately.

These avenues are not alternative pathways – rather they should be mutually reinforcing – and they should also serve to highlight the broad interest of the international community in working together to make real progress on this issue.

Thank you Mr Chair.

14 November 2019