



AN ASSESSMENT OF IMPLEMENTATION OF THE POLITICAL DECLARATION ON EXPLOSIVE WEAPONS IN POPULATED AREAS

BRIEFING PAPER

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COVER PHOTO:

A serviceman stands among rubble at the central bus station of Zaporizhzhia, Ukraine, after two Russian guided aerial bombs damaged both the station and a student clinic on 10 August 2025.

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The Explosive Weapons Monitor is a civil society initiative that conducts research and analysis on harms from and practices of explosive weapon use and monitors the universalisation and implementation of the *Political Declaration on Strengthening the Protection of Civilians from the Humanitarian Consequences Arising from the Use of Explosive Weapons in Populated Areas*. This research aims to:

- Advance the global recognition and understanding of the impact on civilians of the use of explosive weapons;
- Strengthen research and monitoring on civilian harm from the use of explosive weapons;
- Promote endorsement and support implementation of the Political Declaration; and
- Strengthen collaboration and information sharing between all stakeholders to the Political Declaration process of work.

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Summary

This briefing paper provides an overview of the steps taken by states to operationalise the *Political Declaration on Strengthening the Protection of Civilians from the Humanitarian Consequences Arising from the Use of Explosive Weapons in Populated Areas*.¹ This paper is structured to provide:

1. Reflections on the state of national implementation of the Political Declaration (p. 5);
2. A thematic overview of national efforts in core areas of implementation (p. 8); and
3. Recommendations for strengthening implementation of the Declaration's commitments (p. 26).

Information is drawn primarily from responses to the Explosive Weapons Monitor's 2025 implementation survey, which gathers information directly from endorsing states on their national implementation efforts since the Declaration opened for endorsement in November 2022.² This includes responses from 32 states, more than one-third of all 89 states that had endorsed the Declaration when the survey was disseminated. It also incorporates some information shared by states through other sources, such as presentations and interventions at workshops and meetings related to the Declaration's implementation.³

Introduction

Around the world, civilians continue to bear the devastating and predictable consequences of the use of explosive weapons in populated areas. In 2024 alone, bombing and shelling by state and non-state actors were recorded in more than 70 countries and territories. Heavy bombardment in Gaza, Lebanon, Myanmar, Sudan, Syria, and Ukraine caused tens of thousands of civilian deaths and injuries, as well as the destruction of homes, hospitals, schools, and other essential infrastructure rendering entire neighbourhoods uninhabitable. Attacks on healthcare increased by more than 60 percent, the use of explosive weapons against education facilities more than doubled, and attacks affecting humanitarian aid operations were reported nearly five times more often than the previous year. Explosive remnants of war continued to block safe access to land, delay reconstruction and return, and prolong humanitarian suffering.⁴

These figures illustrate a consistent global pattern of harm: when explosive weapons are used in towns and cities, civilians suffer the most – not only at the time of attack but also through the long-term, reverberating effects that deny communities access to healthcare, education, food, water, and livelihoods.

The Political Declaration was developed to address this enduring pattern of harm and to serve as a framework for change. Now endorsed by 89 states, it represents a shared international commitment to strengthen the protection of civilians, set new standards against bombing and shelling in populated areas, and guide a shift in military policy and practice away from the use of explosive force in urban settings and other populated areas. The effectiveness of the Declaration ultimately depends on the process of operationalising its commitments at the national level - turning political pledges into concrete policies, procedures, and practices.

This paper aims to take stock of national-level implementation efforts undertaken by endorsing states in the three years after the Declaration's adoption in Dublin, Ireland. This includes information on what endorsing states have done to review and adapt their national policies and practices. Just over one-third of endorsing states have responded to the 2025 survey, providing valuable insights into how implementation is progressing. The specific focus and approach taken by each state naturally varies depending on its national context, military structures, and capacities.

Understanding how states are translating the Declaration's commitments into action - and sharing examples of policies, practices, progress, and challenges - can support other endorsing states in developing their own implementation efforts. This exchange of information and experience enables peer learning, helping states identify practical entry points and approaches for national-level work. The process of gathering and comparing this information also facilitates the compilation and exchange of good practices and lessons learned, which are essential to sustaining momentum and making the Declaration effective.

These responses not only demonstrate what has already been done but also illustrate what is possible. They allow us to assess how different aspects of the Declaration are being addressed, to what extent progress is being made, and whether these efforts are advancing the overarching goal: to strengthen the protection of civilians from the use of explosive weapons in populated areas.

The information collected and the accompanying analysis help to identify trends and gaps, suggesting priorities for future work. They also inform guidance and collective support efforts, ensuring that international and civil society actors can tailor their assistance and coordinate activities effectively to meet states' needs.

While national reporting on implementation is not a formal requirement under the Declaration, the sharing of regular updates, including through implementation surveys, was a key recommendation in the outcome document of the first international follow-up conference.⁵ Such reporting contributes directly to fulfilling the Declaration's commitments on information exchange and transparency. It also reflects an important expectation - that endorsing the Declaration entails taking active steps to review and adjust national policy and practice.

Reflections on the state of national implementation

This review of state reporting and consultations shows that national implementation of the *Political Declaration on Strengthening the Protection of Civilians from the Use of Explosive Weapons in Populated Areas* is underway across most endorsing states that have reported on their implementation efforts, but at varying levels of depth and progress. The first three years since the Declaration's adoption have seen important progress in institutionalisation and awareness, but comprehensive, distinct changes to policy and practice that directly addresses the use of explosive weapons in populated areas remain limited.

Overview of implementation efforts across endorsing states

The survey responses and national reports reflect a broad and diverse spectrum of engagement with the Declaration, spanning all world regions and encompassing both states without armed forces and others actively engaged in military operations. Many states have taken early steps such as national dissemination of the Declaration, the appointment of national focal points, and the initiation of inter-ministerial coordination processes. These represent an important first phase of operationalising the Declaration nationally.

However, collaboration and coordination between ministries and armed forces remains limited. While ministries of foreign affairs often lead work around the Declaration, the involvement of ministries of defence and the armed forces remains quite limited in many countries despite their central role in implementing several of the Declaration's operational commitments. Greater prioritisation and commitment from military entities is needed to make progress on key areas.

From endorsement to implementation

Most endorsing states are in an early stage of reviewing laws, doctrine, and policies to identify potential adjustments and are not yet enacting concrete changes to implement the Declaration's commitments. However, early progress is visible. A couple of states, such as **Austria** and **Switzerland**, have developed national implementation plans or dedicated cross-ministerial working groups. Given that the Declaration is still in its early years, it is expected that translating political commitments into military policy and practice will take time, though a clear gap remains between political endorsement and concrete operationalisation of the commitments.

Reliance on existing military policies

Implementation is frequently framed by endorsing states as adherence to international humanitarian law (IHL), despite the Declaration's specific EWIPA-focused commitments. States cite existing policies and procedures such as military doctrine on IHL, rules of engagement, targeting doctrine, or military legal training as evidence of implementation.

Yet, these measures often do not specifically reference the Declaration or address its central aim to prevent and reduce civilian harm from the use of explosive weapons in populated areas. Some of these policies are not publicly available and the extent to which such measures explicitly operationalise EWIPA commitments remains difficult to assess.

By framing implementation largely in terms of IHL compliance, many states obscure the Declaration's distinctive purpose and miss its added value - to translate humanitarian principles into concrete operational changes that limit the use and effects of explosive weapons in populated areas. Implementation so far lacks sufficient emphasis on translating the Declaration's objectives into developing new operational practices that prioritise civilian protection.

Avoiding or limiting the use of explosive weapons with wide-area effects

A smaller group of endorsing states have begun taking specific steps to avoid or restrict the use of explosive weapons with wide-area effects in populated areas. This reflects growing recognition of the direct link between a weapon's area effects and the heightened risk of civilian harm, and the need for operational guidance to reduce that risk. While approaches differ, these measures mark a shift toward more deliberate efforts to limit the use and impact of explosive weapons in populated areas.

Data collecting and sharing

Commitments to gather and share data on civilian harm remain among the least developed aspects of implementation yet are increasingly recognised as essential to effective civilian protection. Only a few states, including the **United States** and the **Netherlands**, have begun institutionalising civilian harm tracking mechanisms, while others identify this as a future objective. Many states continue to rely primarily on post-strike assessments, which are often limited in scope, focusing on military effects rather than comprehensive analysis of civilian impact. Building a stronger culture of transparency, systematic data collection, and information-sharing will be critical to advancing evidence-based policy and operational learning under the Declaration.

Victim assistance and community recovery

Support for victims and conflict-affected communities requires more targeted responses that address the distinct needs arising from the use of explosive weapons in populated areas. **Bosnia and Herzegovina** and **Morocco** are aligning national victim-assistance frameworks with the Declaration. Other states report that they are supporting conflict-affected communities through international cooperation and funding. Existing mine-action and victim-assistance mechanisms, as well as funding for them, provide a strong foundation, but victim assistance should explicitly address the full range of EWIPA-related harm to civilians, such as dealing with traumatic injuries and long-term medical support, psychological harm, damage to critical infrastructure and community recovery. Few states have developed dedicated EWIPA-specific measures. Improved data collection on civilian harm from explosive weapons would support progress in supporting the needs of affected people and communities.

State leadership in promoting the Declaration

A group of lead states are sustaining international momentum by organising and funding workshops, facilitating thematic dialogues, and engaging in peer exchanges with other endorsers. **Ireland, Norway, and Costa Rica** currently serve as the “Trio” of coordinating countries, while **Austria** has also taken a prominent role in promoting the Declaration through regional meetings and follow-up initiatives. Clear thematic areas of focus are beginning to emerge, but a more systematic approach would help strengthen effective implementation across states.

Many states are also prioritising outreach and universalisation - encouraging new endorsements and promoting the Declaration through regional and multilateral forums. Continued attention to national implementation, and to leading on key themes of implementation at the international level, will be essential to demonstrate the Declaration’s practical relevance and ensure that its humanitarian goals translate into concrete policy and operational change. Building a shared culture of implementation remains key to sustaining progress and reinforcing the Declaration’s global impact.

Conclusion

Institutional foundations for implementation now exist across many endorsing states. However, the depth of engagement varies. While a handful of countries are moving toward structured plans for implementation, most remain at the level of coordination, awareness raising, and reinforcing general adherence to IHL rather than taking action to address civilian harm from the use of explosive weapons in populated areas more specifically.

The challenge ahead lies in shifting to concrete, EWIPA-specific changes. This includes developing policies and practices to put in place restrictions on use of explosive weapons in populated areas, undertaking data collection on civilian harm from explosive weapons, and supporting people and communities affected by explosive weapons so that the Declaration's humanitarian purpose translates into measurable protection for civilians.

Thematic overview of national efforts in core areas of implementation

1. Embedding the Political Declaration across national institutions

Effective national implementation of the Political Declaration depends on embedding its commitments across ministries, armed forces, and other relevant institutions. This institutional anchoring creates the framework through which policy, legal, and operational reforms can be coordinated and sustained. While nearly all endorsing states have designated focal points or coordination structures, greater cross-government integration and military engagement is needed in many contexts.

Focal points and coordination mechanisms

Most endorsing states have identified clear government focal points, often located within ministries of foreign affairs, typically in disarmament, arms control, or humanitarian affairs divisions. Many of these are supported by coordination mechanisms that bring in the ministry of defence or the armed forces, reflecting an emerging whole-of-government approach.

- **Austria** has established the Centre of Excellence on the Protection of Civilians which will facilitate future implementation of the Political Declaration in the Ministry of Defence and Armed Forces through awareness raising and training activities.
- **Switzerland** has established multiple focal points across its Ministry of Defence (DDPS), Armed Forces, and Ministry of Foreign Affairs, formalised through an internal note that allocates responsibility for each paragraph of the Declaration.
- **Belgium** has appointed points of contact across the Armed Forces at strategic, legal, and operational levels, who meet on a regular basis.
- **Sierra Leone** and **Serbia** have embedded coordination within existing national commissions on arms and ammunition or mine action bodies, ensuring that the EWIPA issue is linked to wider civilian protection and clearance efforts.

- **Bosnia and Herzegovina** is reviewing coordination mechanisms between civilian agencies (its Mine Action Centre and civil protection services) and the Armed Forces to ensure a unified approach to protecting civilians in the instance of the use of explosive weapons in populated areas.
- **Iceland, Luxembourg, and San Marino** have centralised coordination within their ministries of foreign affairs due to the absence of national armed forces.

Overall, focal points exist in nearly all responding states, but the level of coordination and engagement varies. A few have formalised whole-of-government mechanisms (for example, **Switzerland** and **Belgium**), whereas many others rely on ad-hoc communication or shared responsibility between ministries.

Government engagement and scope

Implementation of the Political Declaration typically involves ministries of foreign affairs, ministries of defence and defence/armed forces, with some participation from interior, home affairs, and justice ministries. A number of states make use of existing national IHL committees or interdepartmental mechanisms to coordinate implementation of the Declaration, such as **Switzerland's** Interdepartmental Committee for IHL (ICIHL) and **Mexico's** Inter-Secretarial Commission on IHL (CIDIH).

Dissemination and awareness

Dissemination of the Political Declaration has been broadly undertaken by most responding countries to build a shared understanding of the Declaration's commitments across governments, though levels of engagement, commitment, and coordination vary significantly across countries. Most states have circulated the Declaration through government and armed forces channels and are still in a phase of national awareness-raising, though a few have begun developing more structured approaches to implementation.

- **Switzerland** has been particularly proactive as the Declaration has been presented to Parliament, the Joint Doctrine Board of the Armed Forces responsible for approval of all doctrine and regulations, and the Interdepartmental Committee for IHL. It is now a standing agenda item for ongoing discussion.
- **Italy** has integrated the Declaration into the Armed Forces' directives.
- **Belgium's** Legal Department of Armed Forces issued a circular outlining the main issues related to use of explosive weapons in populated areas and steps for implementation of the Declaration within the military.

- **Finland** has disseminated the Declaration across the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Ministry of Defence, and all branches of the Finnish Defence Forces including the Defence Command, Army, Navy and Air Force.
- **San Marino** has publicly communicated its endorsement through press releases and subsequent national media coverage, and in parliamentary reporting.

Action plans and implementation frameworks

Clear, coordinated national implementation plans are important to translate the Political Declaration's commitments into demonstrable change - linking political endorsement to practical, EWIPA-focused actions. So far, only a couple of endorsing states have taken this step.

- **Austria's** Ministry of Defence has developed a national implementation plan for the Political Declaration and established a working group to oversee implementation measures and identify areas of work.
- **Switzerland** has conducted a round of internal consultations and questions through a survey within the Armed Forces to assess existing practices in relation to the Declaration's operational commitments in sections 3 and 4.

2. Changes to military policy and practice

Embedding the Political Declaration within national defence policy requires systematic review of existing military doctrine, policies and procedures, as well as the development of new or dedicated policies specific to the use of explosive weapons in populated areas. Many endorsing states are undertaking internal assessments to determine how existing policies and practices can be adapted to meet the Declaration's commitments to identify where gaps exist to develop new ones. These reviews form the bridge between political endorsement and practical implementation to translate political goals into clear operational guidance for commanders and planners. Developing new, dedicated policies that provide specific guidance on the use of explosive weapons in populated areas will help embed restraint and civilian protection within military institutions.

Reviewing and developing national policy and practice

Many endorsing states are reviewing national policies, doctrines, and legal frameworks to develop new or dedicated policies on the use of explosive weapons in populated areas, in some cases aligning existing measures with the commitments of the Political Declaration. In most cases, this process builds on national policy and doctrine which guide how IHL is applied in practice, while some states have initiated more targeted reviews to assess how military doctrine, targeting procedures, and operational planning can better account for the specific risks posed by explosive weapons in populated areas. Strengthening policy in this area is essential to translating legal commitments into practical direction for commanders and planners.

Developing new or dedicated policies on the use of explosive weapons in populated areas and civilian protection

A small but growing number of states are developing dedicated or overarching protection of civilians policies that incorporate EWIPA-specific commitments. These initiatives provide tailored operational guidance to reduce civilian harm from explosive weapons and demonstrate concrete national implementation through policy and doctrine. Although the level of detail and public availability varies, these efforts set an important precedent by embedding the Declaration's commitments into institutional frameworks.

- **Austria** is developing a specific policy on the protection of civilians from the use of explosive weapons in populated areas to provide overarching guidance to the Ministry of Defence and the Austrian Armed Forces. This policy will complement a broader protection of civilians policy currently under development and is intended to ensure that EWIPA considerations are systematically integrated into operational planning, targeting, and training across the defence sector.
- **Bosnia and Herzegovina** is reviewing its operational doctrine to align national practices with the Political Declaration. The review focuses on restricting the use of heavy explosive weapons in urban areas, reinforcing proportionality and precaution in attacks, improving target verification procedures, and ensuring that operational planning incorporates risk assessments of direct, indirect, and reverberating effects of explosive weapons, including potential damage to critical infrastructure and hazards from unexploded ordnance.
- The **Netherlands** has undertaken a comprehensive review of its protection of civilians and civilian harm policies following incidents of civilian casualties in previous operations. A step-by-step improvement plan has been established within the Ministry of Defence, supported by a specialised policy team, enhanced parliamentary reporting, and engagement with non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and academia. A baseline assessment identified areas for improvement in doctrine, training, as well as tactics, techniques, and procedures (TTPs). The government's response to the Sorgdrager Committee's investigation into the 2015 Hawija airstrike specifically recommends greater restraint in the use of explosive weapons in populated areas, integrating these findings into ongoing doctrinal and policy reform.
- **Switzerland** has reviewed its Armed Forces' doctrinal documents and regulations concerning the use of explosive weapons in populated areas, though without specifying the requirements introduced. Since 2018, its mandatory weapons review process has incorporated EWIPA-related considerations, enabling the issuance of binding requirements on training and operational use that are subsequently reflected in relevant military regulations.

Integrating EWIPA considerations into existing doctrine and legal frameworks

Most endorsing states are integrating EWIPA considerations into existing IHL, targeting, and operational frameworks. Rather than creating new instruments, this approach builds on established doctrine, rules of engagement, and targeting guidance. Some states explicitly reference the Political Declaration, while others cite broader frameworks that align with the Declaration but do not directly address the use of explosive weapons in populated areas or specify measures to operationalise its commitments. A few are advancing comprehensive civilian harm mitigation policies, though it remains unclear to what extent these explicitly address the use of explosive weapons in populated areas.

- The **United States** regards the content of the Declaration as reflected in its existing practice, referencing the Department of Defense (DoD) Directive on the Law of War Program⁶ which establishes policy and oversight, and the *DoD Law of War Manual*⁷ which provides operational and legal guidance for commanders and advisers. It also highlights the *DoD Instruction on civilian harm mitigation and response*,⁸ which implements the *Civilian Harm Mitigation and Response Action Plan (CHMR-AP)* as the primary framework for institutionalising civilian harm mitigation and response within the Department of Defense.
- **Belgium** integrates EWIPA-related commitments within existing NATO-aligned doctrine and procedures. It applies NATO's collateral-damage estimation methodology, the *Protection of Civilians Handbook*, and relevant Allied Joint Publications, which reinforce key principles of the Political Declaration. The Belgian Air Force is formalising targeting procedures and doctrine with a clear emphasis on civilian protection and weapon precision, supported by equipment upgrades, a comprehensive doctrinal review aligned with NATO policy (scheduled for completion in 2028–2030), and updates to standard operating procedures and tactics, techniques and procedures.
- **France** cites the *Manual of the Law of Military Operations (2022)* as the main policy in relation to the use of explosive weapons in populated areas⁹ and a series of inter-service doctrine publications produced by the Joint Centre for Concepts, Doctrine and Experimentation. These cover collateral damage estimation,¹⁰ civil military cooperation,¹¹ and explosive remnants of war.¹²
- **Italy** cites its *Manual on International Humanitarian Law for the Armed Forces* and the *Directive on the Protection of Cultural Property in Armed Conflict* as the main references governing the use of explosive weapons. The Italian Armed Forces also conduct article 36 legal reviews of weapons and apply tactical instructions and operational caveats in multinational missions to ensure compliance with national and international law. Doctrinal reviews are underway to align military practice with evolving obligations such as the Political Declaration.

- **Australia** references its *Law of Armed Conflict Doctrine* (2023) as the key policy document guiding the Australian Defence Force's operational planning and implementation of EWIPA-related commitments. This doctrine provides direction to ADF commanders on the application of IHL, precautionary principles, and targeting procedures, supported by the Australian Defence Force's *Targeting Doctrine*.
- In **Brazil**, EWIPA commitments are progressively integrated into doctrine, training, and operational practice. Manuals reviewed include the *Manual on the Employment of IHL in the Armed Forces* (2011), *Joint Operations Doctrine Manuals* (Volumes 1 and 2, 2020), and updated land force manuals such as the *Urban Operations Manual* (2022), *Civil Affairs Manual* (2021), and *Civilian Protection Manual* (2021). Together, these provide detailed operational guidance on urban warfare, civilian-military interaction, and protection of civilians.
- **New Zealand** references its *Disarmament and Arms Control Strategy 2024–2026*¹³ which explicitly references the Declaration as part of its objective to advance humanitarian disarmament norms. It also links EWIPA considerations with Defence Force Order 35¹⁴ on civilian-harm response and the *Law of Armed Conflict Manual*.¹⁵ Under the updated export control framework, the Declaration is now cited as a non-binding commitment to be considered when assessing proposed exports, ensuring its principles are integrated into export licensing decisions. A national review conducted during the endorsement process found that existing defence policies and practices were already consistent with the Declaration's aims.
- **Peru** maintains a framework anchored in legislation regulating the use of force by the Armed Forces and National Police (Legislative Decrees Nos. 1095 of 2010 and 1186 of 2015). Complementary measures include updated *Rules of Engagement* (2022), *Rules on the Use of Force* (2023), and the *Joint Manual of Rules of Operational Conduct* (2024), which provide operational guidance to prevent civilian harm and ensure compliance with IHL.
- **Indonesia** is assessing potential doctrinal and legal updates to align national practice with the Political Declaration, though concrete policy revisions remain under consideration.
- **Ireland** reports that EWIPA considerations are embedded within Defence Forces' targeting doctrine and training.
- **Japan** considers its existing laws and regulations sufficient to meet the commitments of the Declaration and does not see a need for further review.

Policies linked to the control, regulation, and safe management of explosive weapons

Some states approach the implementation of EWIPA-specific commitments through national laws regulating the possession, manufacture, and use of explosives. While not directly focused on military operations, these related frameworks enhance oversight, accountability, and risk management related to explosive weapons. They demonstrate that, beyond operational policy, several states are reinforcing systems for the responsible management of explosive weapons - reducing risks of diversion, unsafe storage, and accidental detonation - while embedding stronger safety and accountability standards.

- **Madagascar** maintains a national legal framework governing explosive and detonating substances, which establishes strict state control and licensing requirements over their production, storage, transfer, and use. These controls ensure that explosives are handled only by authorised entities and in accordance with safety and security standards.
- **Sierra Leone** highlights procedures for the safe destruction of unserviceable explosive weapons and munitions, ensuring civilian safety and environmental protection during demilitarisation and disposal operations.
- **Mexico** enforces the Inter-American Convention against the *Illicit Manufacturing of and Trafficking in Firearms, Ammunition, Explosives and Other Related Materials (CIFTA)*, which mandates documentation and marking of firearms and explosives to ensure lawful use and traceability. The Federal Firearms and Explosives Registry, maintained by the Secretariat of National Defense (SEDENA), requires serial numbers on all weapons, strengthening national oversight and reducing risks associated with diversion or misuse.

Adapting military policy and practice to limit the use of explosive weapons in populated areas

Implementation of the Declaration increasingly focuses on adapting military policy and practice to limit or avoid the use of explosive weapons with wide-area effects in populated areas. Some states are updating existing operational guidance, while others are developing new, dedicated policies to reflect the Declaration's commitments. The key challenge is to move beyond reliance on sufficiency of existing policies and ensure that policies explicitly translate the Declaration's action-oriented commitments into operational practice. Growing recognition of the link between the area effects of explosive weapons and the risk of civilian harm is leading armed forces to introduce clearer measures for civilian harm mitigation, and decision-making procedures to strengthen civilian protection.

Avoiding or limiting the use of explosive weapons with wide-area effects

An increasing number of endorsing states have introduced policies or operational guidance to avoid or restrict the use of explosive weapons with wide-area effects in populated areas. These measures represent direct efforts to implement the Political Declaration's commitment to limit civilian harm by restricting or refraining from use of explosive weapons in populated areas. These approaches reflect some distinct movement toward restraint in the use of wide-area-effect weapons with some states adopting formal avoidance and restriction policies.

- **Switzerland** is among the most explicit examples, having pledged at the 34th International Red Cross Conference to adopt an “avoidance policy” under which explosive weapons with wide-area effects should not be used in populated areas unless sufficient mitigation measures are taken to reduce their area effects and civilian harm.¹⁶ The Swiss Armed Forces have subsequently updated operational regulations governing the 81mm mortar to reflect these requirements.
- **Italy** applies restrictive caveats when Armed Forces are operating in populated areas to avoid the use of wide-area effect explosive weapons. It requires strict target validation and proportionality assessments, including collateral-damage estimation and consideration of indirect effects during operational planning.
- **Bosnia and Herzegovina's** Armed Forces have adopted internal policies restricting the use of heavy explosive munitions in urban areas, encouraging alternative tactics or precision-guided munitions where these can achieve the same objectives with lower civilian risk.
- **Ecuador's** Ministry of Defence and Joint Command of the Armed Forces have issued guidelines requiring avoidance of the use of explosive weapons in populated areas in line with IHL and civilian protection obligations, and they are developing further restrictions on the use of weapons with wide-area effects in densely populated settings.
- The **Netherlands** restricts its use of certain weapons by prohibiting cluster munitions, anti-personnel mines, and no longer uses unguided (“dumb”) aerial bombs. Where appropriate, it employs precision-guided munitions, including GPS-guided small diameter bombs and Excalibur rounds, to reduce wide-area effects and minimise civilian harm.

Rules of Engagement, targeting, and precision

A growing number of states cite rules of engagement, targeting doctrine, and precision-strike policies as policy and operational guidance to guide practice around use of explosive weapons in populated areas.

- The **Netherlands** applies multiple elements within its targeting cycle to strengthen civilian-harm mitigation from the use of explosive weapons in populated areas. This includes clear commander's intent and defined "effects to achieve," systematic collateral damage estimates and an established collateral damage estimation methodology, as well as technical steps such as target coordinate mensuration, weaponeering, continuous target validation, intelligence and transient scans, and structured target lists (Joint/Restricted/No-Strike/Prioritised), paired with a policy choice not to use unguided aerial bombs and to prefer small-diameter/GPS-guided and Excalibur munitions. Technological and doctrinal developments complement the targeting cycle: improved long-range accuracy, a wider variety of fuzes and lower-yield payloads (including delay fuzes to reduce over-target harm), increased use of armed unmanned systems that provide enhanced intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance (ISR) and situational awareness, and a growing emphasis on exploring non-kinetic targeting options.
- **Austria** emphasises minimising collateral damage, preventing target misidentification, and strengthening intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance capacities. Under its Rearmament Plan 2032+, Austria is investing in modern military capabilities with a particular focus on acquiring precision-strike systems to enhance accuracy and reduce civilian harm.
- **Finland** reports that decisions on the use of force are governed by detailed rules of engagement within the command structure, where authorising officers bear direct responsibility for their actions. Rules of engagement are designed to minimise civilian harm, for example, by permitting observed but not unobserved fire and requiring positive target identification before engagement. Operational planning considers these constraints, ensuring proportionality and limiting risk to civilians.
- **Morocco's** Armed Forces implement rules of engagement that prioritise civilian protection and apply detailed tactics, techniques, and procedures governing explosive weapons use. These include civilian-risk assessments in planning, integration of coordination with humanitarian actors, and employ precision munitions and collateral-damage estimation tools to minimise civilian harm.
- **Brazil** has refined its fire-support and targeting practices to stress precision, proportionality, and non-kinetic options where possible. Commanders must analyse terrain, weapon effects, and population density to prevent wide-area impact, particularly in urban environments.

- **Indonesia, Japan, and Slovakia** have not adopted explicit policies restricting the use of explosive weapons in populated areas. Operational decisions are made case by case by commanders to suspend or restrict attacks, guided by rules of engagement to minimise civilian harm within the scope of ongoing military operations.

Post-strike assessment, investigation, and feedback mechanisms

Post-strike evaluation and learning processes are increasingly recognised as essential to civilian-harm mitigation. Most states rely on case-based, after-action reviews and battle-damage assessments. These mechanisms reflect growing awareness that systematic post-strike review is integral to transparency, learning, and operational accountability.

- The **United States** has institutionalised the most comprehensive approach. The *Civilian Harm Mitigation and Response Action Plan (CHMR-AP)* and *DoD Instruction 3000.17* establish civilian harm assessment cells and investigation officers, embedding post-strike evaluation and reporting into doctrine and training.
- **New Zealand's Defence Force Order 35** mandates incident reporting, centralised civilian-harm data storage, and annual public reporting by the Chief of Defence Force.
- The **Netherlands** conducts detailed post-strike assessments supported by a cross-domain database on weapon deployments, case reviews (e.g. Mosul), and a formalised lessons-learned process.
- **Finland** maintains detailed artillery and minefield logs that provide a precise record of weapons use for accountability, clearance, and harm reduction.
- **Germany** captures and shares operational data on weapons effects to refine doctrine and avoid collateral damage.
- **Morocco and Ecuador** both conduct battle-damage assessments and post-operation evaluations, while **Brazil** employs staff to review processes to evaluate humanitarian impact and tactical outcomes.

Assessing and mitigating civilian harm: pre-risk analysis and protection measures

A growing number of states explicitly recognise that use of explosive weapons in populated areas entails distinct humanitarian risks that must be assessed both before and after use. This includes pre-risk analysis during operational planning, weapons reviews, and mitigation measures to protect civilians and critical infrastructure. States are beginning to institutionalise EWIPA risk analysis as part of the planning cycle, a key step in translating political commitments into operational practice.

- **Switzerland** has integrated EWIPA considerations into its compulsory weapons-review process since 2018, ensuring that systems are assessed for their area effects and potential civilian harm. These reviews can trigger binding requirements on training and operational use.
- **Ireland** is developing analytical systems to strengthen understanding of first-, second-, and third-order effects of explosive weapons use, linking operational awareness to improved civilian protection.
- **Ecuador** requires risk assessments and detailed reporting on the use of force after operations, including data on personnel, weapons, effects, and results achieved.
- **Morocco** conducts protection-of-civilians risk assessments during planning and exercises, with civil-military coordination to mitigate harm and enable safe humanitarian access.
- **Portugal** participates in European defence programmes that use modelling of urban damage and detonation effects to refine understanding of weapon impact and improve targeting decisions.

States with limited or indirect application

Several endorsing states have limited offensive capability or primarily engage in peacekeeping and humanitarian missions. Although their direct exposure to EWIPA-related risks is low, some of their military policies support the Declaration's normative aims.

- **Luxembourg** maintains a non-offensive defence posture, with armed forces limited to support and transport roles. National laws on arms and explosives reinforce responsible management and civilian safety.
- **San Marino** has no standing armed forces, and its police do not carry explosive weapons. Possession and use are prohibited.
- **Sierra Leone, Malawi, and Morocco** highlight their contributions to United Nations and African Union peace operations, where national troops uphold IHL principles and civilian-protection standards in conflict environments involving explosive weapons.

Military training and awareness

Training and education are central to translating the Political Declaration's commitments into practice. Many endorsing states have begun incorporating EWIPA-related considerations into military education, operational exercises, and professional development. Training is a key vehicle for embedding EWIPA-specific principles in armed forces' culture and conduct. However, few states have yet developed comprehensive, mandatory training frameworks specifically dedicated to the use of explosive weapons in populated areas.

- **Switzerland** offers one of the most comprehensive examples. EWIPA considerations are integrated into officer education, legal-adviser courses, and urban-warfare modules, with regular briefings to senior commanders.
- **France** embeds EWIPA themes in military legal training and doctrine reviews, ensuring that targeting, proportionality, and precaution principles are understood and applied in practice.
- **Brazil's** Superior School of Defense incorporates the protection of civilians and humanitarian consequences of explosive weapons into its Law of Armed Conflict courses, open to both military and civilian participants. The Armed Forces also use simulation-based training to illustrate how the Political Declaration's commitments influence operational decisions and reduce civilian harm.
- **Ireland** is aligning training across military schools to operationalise EWIPA-specific commitments. EWIPA issues feature in the Engineer Young Officers' Course under the School of Military Engineering, with lesson material updated using insights from relevant international workshops. The Defence Forces are coordinating a practical targeting exercise across training institutions to demonstrate implementation of the Declaration.
- **Belgium** has introduced a protection-of-civilians module in its annual mandatory training for all personnel (Joint Individual Common Core Skills) and developed a targeting-focused induction course for non-specialists, covering collateral damage estimation and civilian-casualty awareness.
- **Bosnia and Herzegovina** is updating its Armed Forces' training curriculum to reflect EWIPA commitments, focusing on the effects of explosive weapons in populated areas and mitigation strategies.
- **Italy** emphasises the use of precision-guided munitions and the selection of appropriate weapons for different operational contexts in its training doctrine.
- **Finland** provides comprehensive IHL and civilian-protection training to both conscripts and professional soldiers, including modules that consider the challenges of urban warfare.
- **Morocco** has integrated EWIPA awareness into its IHL curriculum at military academies and specialised centres, ensuring that officers understand the Declaration's humanitarian objectives.
- **Norway** and **New Zealand** include EWIPA considerations in pre-deployment briefings, inter-agency exercises, and civil-military coordination training. **New Zealand** in particular links training on civilian-harm mitigation to its Defence Force Order 35, which mandates reporting and lessons-learned processes.

- **Japan** provides IHL training across all Self-Defense Forces schools and units. In air operations, trained legal officers advise commanders to ensure that the use of explosive weapons complies fully with IHL.
- The **United States** provides systematic training on IHL and civilian protection policies, covering doctrine, targeting procedures, and operational practices to reduce the likelihood of civilian harm and ensure appropriate response when harm occurs.
- **Malawi** and **Morocco** integrate EWIPA awareness into peacekeeping preparation and professional military education, while **Serbia's** Mine Action Centre conducts "training of trainers" courses on explosive remnants of war to enhance community-level risk education.

3. Data collection and sharing

Efforts to collect and share data on the use and humanitarian impact of explosive weapons are increasing across endorsing states. While many recognise that systematic data collection strengthens operational learning, transparency, and accountability, only a few have developed the institutional capacity to gather and analyse such data consistently or in real time. Building this capability is central to fulfilling the Declaration's commitment to understanding and mitigating civilian harm from the use of explosive weapons.

Civilian harm and casualty tracking

Tracking civilian harm lies at the core of the Declaration's data-sharing commitments. A small but growing number of states are developing structured systems to record, analyse, and respond to civilian harm from explosive weapons use. These mechanisms - ranging from institutionalised harm-tracking frameworks to post-strike assessments - seek to strengthen operational practice, accountability, and the evidence base for reducing civilian harm. However, few states have established comprehensive, real-time systems for such data collection and analysis. In practice, civil society and international organisations continue to fill critical gaps, providing the primary global evidence base for understanding and mitigating the humanitarian impact of explosive weapons in populated areas.

- The **United States** has established the most advanced framework through the Civilian Harm Mitigation and Response Action Plan (CHMR-AP) and DoD Instruction 3000.17, which create assessment cells, investigation officers, and a Civilian Protection Center of Excellence to gather, analyse, and disseminate data on civilian harm. These systems directly inform policy, training, and operational practice but have not yet triggered restrictions on use of explosive weapons in populated areas.

- The **Netherlands** has implemented a comprehensive civilian harm-tracking framework following a strike that caused civilian harm in Hawija in 2015. A dedicated database records weapon deployments, incidents, and post-strike assessments, while a public reporting mechanism and external portal allow communication and accountability. The Ministry of Defence's Civilian Harm Mitigation (CHM) Baseline Study and follow-up processes aim to embed tracking, transparency, and learning across the defence establishment.
- **New Zealand's** Defence Force Order 35 codifies procedures for reporting, investigating, and responding to civilian harm, including from explosive weapons. The order requires centralised data storage, lessons-learned analysis, and annual public reporting by the Chief of Defence Force.
- **Bosnia and Herzegovina** is building on its mine-action data systems to develop broader civilian harm-tracking capacity. The national Mine Action Centre (BHMIC) maintains an incident database covering casualties, explosive types, and affected infrastructure, while the Armed Forces share operational data on clearance and risk assessments.
- In **Somalia**, the Ministry of Defence has identified the establishment of a Civilian Harm Assessment or Tracking Cell as a key priority.
- **Switzerland** has conducted a whole-of-government implementation review, mapping existing data-management practices across ministries and the Armed Forces. The findings are informing policy reforms and coordination mechanisms for managing civilian harm data.
- **Germany** and **Norway** monitor civilian protection through their defence systems and international reporting frameworks but have not yet developed dedicated, real-time tracking mechanisms.
- **Brazil's** Armed Forces integrate civilian harm observation into operations through Civil Affairs Officers (E9), who collect and relay data on civilian impacts and infrastructure damage for analysis and operational adjustment.
- **Ecuador** collects and georeferences data on weapons use, casualties, and affected areas through operational reporting and coordination with the Secretariat of Risk Management and the Judicial Police. These data feed national platforms used for risk management and operational review.

Weapons use and effects data

A few states are advancing data collection on technical and operational effects of explosive weapons through national defence research and international cooperation frameworks. These efforts aim to improve understanding of weapon performance, safety, and the humanitarian impact of explosive use in urban environments. By integrating technical effects into doctrine, and operational guidance, states can reduce harm.

- **Austria** and **Portugal** participate in a project on *Automated Modelling, Identification and Damage Assessment of Urban Terrain*, which uses 3D modelling to assess the impact of explosive weapons in urban settings.
- **Finland** collects operational and technical data on testing and use of explosive weapons. This information is shared internally to assess compliance with humanitarian standards, evaluate risks to civilians, and inform national decision-making on weapon use. Finland's data also contribute to European Union and NATO research cooperation on munitions safety and effects, including studies on blast impact and mitigation measures.
- **Germany** gathers data on the operational use and testing of explosive weapons through national defence research and NATO standardisation processes. These data are used to refine technical standards, improve targeting procedures, and strengthen mechanisms aimed at limiting unintended civilian harm. Germany's approach reflects a broader effort to integrate technical evidence into doctrine and capability development to better protect civilians.
- **Japan** collects and applies data from weapons testing to refine training and ensure compliance with IHL, while **Italy** compiles post-operation data through after-action reviews and contributes its findings to joint NATO and United Nations assessment mechanisms.

Contamination and explosive remnants of war data

Obligations on explosive remnants of war primarily arise under existing instruments such as CCW Protocol V, the Mine Ban Treaty, and the Convention on Cluster Munitions, but the data and experience generated through these frameworks are highly relevant to its implementation. States with mine action programmes and demining responsibilities maintain extensive data on contamination, clearance, and victim assistance, which can inform understanding of the longer-term humanitarian impacts of explosive weapons use. Such information is particularly valuable in urban settings, where explosive remnants are often trapped within rubble and damaged infrastructure, posing complex challenges for clearance and civilian recovery.

- **Australia** reports detailed data under *CCW Protocol V* on detection, clearance, and destruction of explosive remnants of war.

- **Serbia's Mine Action Centre (SMAC)** maintains national databases on contamination, clearance, and victims, guiding demining priorities and risk education.
- **Bosnia and Herzegovina's BHMIC** operates a comparable national database linking contamination mapping, clearance progress, and victim-assistance information.

4. Support to conflict-affected populations and communities

Assistance to victims and communities affected by the use of explosive weapons remains one of the least-developed areas of national implementation. While many endorsing states contribute to humanitarian mine action, clearance, and risk education, fewer have dedicated victim-assistance or community-recovery programmes directly linked to the Political Declaration. Most support is delivered through broader disarmament, humanitarian, and development frameworks, rather than EWIPA-specific mechanisms.

National victim assistance and community recovery measures

- **Bosnia and Herzegovina** has an established framework linking national victim assistance and community protection. Its *National Mine Action Strategy (2024–2027)* incorporates victim assistance, civilian protection, and risk education as cross-cutting priorities and is being updated to reflect the Political Declaration's focus on post-conflict contamination and long-term community support. The government is reviewing the *Law on Protection of Civilian Victims of War* to expand access to psychological care, physical rehabilitation, and socio-economic inclusion, in line with the *Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities* and other victim-assistance commitments. Disaster risk reduction and civil protection frameworks are also being aligned to strengthen coordination during incidents involving explosive weapons, including mass-casualty and infrastructure-disruption events.
- **Morocco** reports humanitarian measures that include ensuring access to affected populations, providing medical and psychological assistance, and conducting demining and risk-education activities.
- In more complex operational environments, persistent insecurity and access barriers continue to hinder victim support. **Palestine** underscores the acute challenges of providing assistance under conditions of occupation and blockade, where humanitarian access is restricted and infrastructure destruction limits the delivery of medical, psychosocial, and social services. **Somalia**, emerging from decades of conflict and rebuilding national defence and governance institutions, faces significant constraints in implementing systematic civilian-harm response and victim-assistance mechanisms. Progress remains limited by resource gaps, ongoing conflict, and reliance on international humanitarian actors for the delivery of victim support and emergency care.

International support for conflict-affected communities

Many endorsing states contribute to the objectives of the Political Declaration through international cooperation and assistance rather than domestic victim-assistance programmes. Their efforts largely focus on humanitarian mine action, risk education, clearance, and post-conflict recovery, reflecting the Declaration's broader humanitarian aims. International assistance remains a central pillar of states' implementation of the Political Declaration, though most efforts continue to operate through broader mine-action and humanitarian frameworks rather than through EWIPA-specific victim-assistance mechanisms.

- **Austria** promotes stronger links between the Declaration and related humanitarian disarmament instruments - such as the *Mine Ban Treaty* and the *Convention on Cluster Munitions* - to encourage a coherent international approach to victim assistance and protection of civilians from explosive weapons.
- **Andorra** and **Luxembourg** provide annual financial contributions to global victim-assistance initiatives, while **Belgium** and **Germany** maintain long-standing support for mine action, humanitarian aid, and post-conflict recovery through bilateral partnerships and multilateral agencies.
- **Brazil** channels assistance through its humanitarian and development cooperation programmes, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the *Brazilian Cooperation Agency (ABC)* to provide funding and technical expertise to international recovery efforts.
- The **United States** provides significant funding to humanitarian mine action. Germany combines financial assistance with operational partnerships through the United Nations and NGOs.

5. Universalisation and building a community of practice

Universalisation remains essential to the Declaration's long-term success. As such, endorsing states have advocated for broader participation and promotion of the Declaration's norms and objectives since its adoption. While some countries have taken leadership roles in convening and funding international and regional meetings and briefings, others have engaged in peer-to-peer dialogue to exchange good practices and lessons learned in implementing the Declaration's commitments. While this engagement expands the Declaration's reach, its impact will rely on continued political engagement to affect operational change.

Expanding endorsement and global reach

Universalisation remains a central focus for sustaining the momentum and legitimacy of the Political Declaration. Since its adoption, endorsing states have continued to advocate for broader participation and to promote the Declaration's humanitarian and normative objectives through diplomatic outreach, regional engagement, and public advocacy.

- **Ireland** and **Norway**, as co-leads of the Declaration's process of work alongside Costa Rica, as well as **Austria**, an early leader in the process, have maintained leadership roles in convening and funding international and regional meetings and work on explosive weapons in populated areas, and in engaging directly with states that have not yet endorsed. The Oslo Conference in 2024 represented a key milestone, generating renewed political attention, securing new endorsements, and setting a framework for ongoing peer review and implementation dialogue. The *Vienna conference on military implementation of the Declaration* convened military representatives from many endorsing states.
- Other countries have integrated the promotion of the Declaration into their outreach. **Austria** and the **United Kingdom** have organised briefings for European countries, while **Malawi**, **Sierra Leone**, and **Comoros** have used African regional forums to encourage wider endorsement and to reinforce the Declaration's humanitarian goals at the continental level. In the Asia-Pacific region, **New Zealand** and **Australia** have promoted the Declaration's principles through disarmament dialogues and IHL forums, helping to raise awareness among non-endorsing states.

Partnerships, civil society, and other cooperation

Collaboration with civil society and international organisations continues to be a defining feature of the Declaration's implementation and promotion.

- States such as **Austria**, **Ireland**, **Germany**, **Norway**, and the **United Kingdom** have partnered with organisations including the United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research (UNIDIR), United Nations Office for Disarmament Affairs (UNODA), and members of civil society - notably the International Network on Explosive Weapons (INEW), Article 36, and Humanity & Inclusion - to organise thematic workshops on military policy and practice, data collection, healthcare in settings where explosive weapons are being used, humanitarian access, explosive ordnance and risk education, and intersectional inclusion. Regional workshops have been convened in Togo for West African states, in South Africa for Southern African states, and Morocco for North African and some Middle Eastern states. These forums provide spaces for governments, armed forces, and humanitarian actors to exchange lessons, discuss practical implementation challenges, and develop shared tools for tracking progress.

- Peer-to-peer engagement among states has also expanded. The **United States** and **Netherlands** co-lead the *Civilian Harm Mitigation International Contact Group*, which has become a forum for dialogue for several armed forces and includes some civil society organisations for parts of discussion. **Switzerland** hosted a dedicated 2024 workshop on conducting legal reviews of weapons and operations.

While progress remains gradual, regional and multilateral engagement is steadily expanding the Declaration's reach and embedding its principles in humanitarian and military policy. A growing community of practice now links states, armed forces, and civil society committed to reducing civilian harm. Its continued impact will rely on sustained political engagement and translating shared principles into concrete operational change.

Recommendations for strengthening implementation of the Political Declaration

The Political Declaration offers a practical and normative tool for reducing civilian harm and strengthening the protection of civilians from the use of explosive weapons in populated areas. Implementation is advancing but at an early stage. The next phase should move from endorsement and awareness to more concrete changes aimed at specifically addressing the humanitarian consequences of the use of explosive weapons in populated areas.

1. *Strengthen national coordination and designate focal points*

States should establish or reinforce national coordination frameworks to ensure sustained, government-wide implementation, including stronger engagement from ministries of defence and armed forces. Designating focal points across relevant ministries and establishing inter-ministerial mechanisms can help coordinate efforts, set priorities, and track progress. These mechanisms should also engage civil society and humanitarian partners to enable dialogue between political, military, and operational stakeholders. Developing concrete implementation plans with clear goals, timelines, and responsibilities will support sustained and measurable progress.

2. *Translate commitments into policy and operational guidance*

Political commitments must be embedded in practical military and policy measures. States should develop or adapt operational guidance to implement the Declaration's commitments, including measures to avoid civilian harm by restricting or refraining from the use of explosive weapons in populated areas. This requires integrating assessments of weapon effects, including area effects, as key determinants of civilian harm and strengthening understanding of indirect and reverberating impacts in planning and decision-making.

EWIPA-specific training should be prioritised, incorporating urban warfare scenarios and civilian-protection considerations. Military workshops involving humanitarian and civilian actors can help share perspectives and strengthen operational understandings. Key terms in the Declaration – such as ‘explosive weapons’, ‘populated areas’, ‘wide-area effects’, and ‘reverberating effects’ – should be translated into clear military terminology to ensure consistent understanding across armed forces.

3. Develop EWIPA-specific policies and practices

Implementation of the Declaration increasingly focuses on adapting military policy and practice to limit or avoid the use of explosive weapons with wide-area effects in populated areas. To do so, states must move beyond reliance on sufficiency of existing policies and ensure that policies explicitly translate the Declaration’s action-oriented commitments into operational practice. As states update existing operational guidance and develop new, dedicated policies to reflect the Declaration’s commitments, they should ensure these policies consider the link between the area effects of explosive weapons and the risk of civilian harm, the long-term reverberating effects on civilians of the use of explosive weapons in populated areas, as well as measures for civilian harm mitigation and decision-making procedures to strengthen civilian protection.

4. Build civilian harm tracking and data systems

There is growing recognition that civilian harm tracking has operational and humanitarian value, yet few states have established real-time data collection and sharing mechanisms. States should develop or integrate civilian harm tracking systems within armed forces to record, assess, and learn from incidents involving explosive weapons, recognising that this is foundational to informing operational changes. Data tracking systems should capture both direct and indirect effects, including infrastructure disruption and displacement. Civilian harm data should be used to inform operational adjustments and broader learning, and armed forces should collaborate with third parties to strengthen transparency and investigations.

5. Strengthen victim assistance and long-term community support and recovery

Victim assistance remains an underdeveloped area of implementation. States should build on existing health, social welfare, and mine-action systems to deliver EWIPA-specific victim assistance, including emergency medical care, physical rehabilitation, psychosocial support, and socio-economic reintegration. Assistance programmes should reflect the distinct patterns of EWIPA-related harm, including trauma, displacement, loss of livelihoods, and damage to critical infrastructure. Long-term recovery efforts should promote inclusion, accessibility, and dignity, recognising the broader impact on families and communities.

6. Promote transparency and cooperation

Transparency and cooperation are key to credibility and mutual learning. States should publish regular implementation updates, respond to surveys, and share examples of national policies and practices through the ewipa.org portal and at follow-up conferences on the Declaration. Peer-to-peer exchanges among states, international organisations, the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), and NGOs provide valuable opportunities to exchange lessons learned and practical solutions. Such collaboration is particularly useful for states with limited resources, enabling them to draw on others' experiences and strengthen their own efforts.

7. Building a community of practice and sustained implementation

Driving systemic change in how states and militaries approach the use of explosive weapons in populated areas requires sustained commitment - but early action is important. Clear thematic priorities are emerging, yet a more structured mapping of implementation themes, supported by shared technical guidance, common plans, and communities of practice, would help strengthen coherence across endorsing states.

8. Advance universalisation and norm promotion

Universalisation remains essential to the Declaration's long-term success. Endorsing states should engage in regional and bilateral outreach to encourage non-endorsers to join. Sharing humanitarian data, operational experience, and evidence of good practice can strengthen the case for endorsement and build support for restraint in populated areas. Regardless of context, there is an important role for all endorsing states to more actively critique harmful practices when explosive weapons are used in cities and towns, and to play a more vocal role in promoting new norms and standards against this use.

Conclusion

With ongoing conflicts causing high levels of civilian harm from explosive weapons, there is both urgency and opportunity to advance implementation of the Political Declaration. Progress to date demonstrates commitment but also highlights the need for deeper institutional engagement and concrete operational change. Strengthening national coordination, integrating EWIPA-specific measures into military practice, improving data collection and victim assistance, and fostering transparency and cooperation can help to ensure the Declaration delivers tangible protection for civilians in conflict.

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