Draft Political Declaration on Strengthening the Protection of Civilians from Humanitarian Harm arising from the indiscriminate use of Explosive Weapons in Populated Areas

Part A: Preamble

Section 1

1.1 As contemporary conflicts become more protracted, complex and urbanised, the proportion of civilian casualties is increasing. Much of the harm and destruction observed in current conflicts appears to be the result of infringement of International Humanitarian Law fundamental rules and principles. The causes involve a range of factors, including the indiscriminate use of explosive weapons in populated areas, but also the use of tactics designed to exploit the proximity of civilians and civilian objects to military objectives in populated areas, such as the use of civilians as human shields and pose complex challenges for the protection of civilians.

1.2 As a result of direct attacks against civilians and civilian objects, indiscriminate or disproportionate uses of explosive weapons - including improvised explosive devices (IEDs) - by some parties to conflict, explosive weapons with wide area effects can have a devastating impact on civilians and civilian objects in populated areas. Beyond immediate deaths and injuries, civilian populations can be exposed beyond immediate deaths and injuries, to severe and long-lasting reverberating effects. These can occur in particular when critical civilian infrastructure is damaged or destroyed, such as hospitals, energy networks, and water and sanitation systems as well as cultural heritage sites. The destruction of housing, schools and cultural heritage sites further aggravates civilian suffering. These destructions can result in the displacement of people within and across borders while explosive remnants of war can impede the return of displaced persons and cause casualties long after hostilities have ended. Urban warfare can also aggravate civilian suffering. These effects can have a negative impact on progress towards the Sustainable Development Goals and can result in the displacement of people within and across borders. Following urban armed conflict, explosive remnants of war can impede the return of displaced persons and cause casualties long after hostilities have ended.

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1.4 Tactics designed to exploit the proximity of civilians and civilian objects to military objectives in populated areas, the use of improvised explosive devices directed against civilian and civilian objects, and violations of International Humanitarian Law, including by non-State armed groups, all exacerbate these challenges and are of grave concern.
Section 2

2.4 We welcome the work of United Nations Security Council to strengthen the protection of civilians during armed conflict and to strengthen compliance with International Humanitarian Law, and recall to that end UNSC Resolutions on the protection of civilians in armed conflicts, including Resolution 1265 (1999), 1894 (2009) and 2417 (2018).

Part B: Operative Section

with regard to the use of explosive weapons with wide area effects in populated areas.