



**S L O V A K I A**

**Statement**

**by**

**H. E. Mr. Andrej DROBA**

Ambassador of the Slovak Republic to Ireland

at the EWIPA Conference

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*Your Excellency Minister Coveney,  
Excellencies, ladies and gentlemen,*

At the outset, allow me to thank Ireland for organizing this high-level conference and for its tireless efforts, which brought the negotiations of this Political Declaration to successful conclusion.

We highly appreciate that the process of consultations in Geneva, which lasted almost three years and progressed despite the COVID-19 pandemic, was transparent and inclusive. It allowed for substantive contributions from the whole spectrum of relevant actors, including the UN, International Committee of the Red Cross and civil society organisations.

Leadership of Ireland and its continued persistence has brought us up to this point, where we can now endorse the Political Declaration on Strengthening the Protection of Civilians from the Humanitarian Consequences arising from the use of Explosive Weapons in Populated Areas. Together with other countries, Slovakia gladly joins this Declaration.

Slovakia, as a traditional supporter of International Humanitarian Law (IHL), seizes this opportunity to express its strong commitment to the IHL and its principles it is based on. The respect for the IHL is an irreplaceable tool for effective protection of civilians in armed conflicts. The protection of civilians is an obligation of all parties to conflict, which have to distinguish between civilians and combatants and between civilian and military objects and to ensure that attacks are proportional and necessary.

The conduct of hostilities in populated areas carries a high risk of indiscriminate impact and increases the risks of death and injury for civilians, particularly when fighting involves the use of explosive weapons or improvised explosive devices. When explosive weapons are used in populated areas, large majority of those killed and injured are civilians.

Civilians suffer devastating harm not only directly, but also through long-lasting indirect effects. Many surviving victims face lifelong disabilities and grave psychological trauma. Damage or destruction of critical infrastructure, schools, hospitals and environment further worsens civilian suffering. Urban warfare forces millions of people to leave their homes and unexploded ordnance prevents them from returning and impedes post-conflict reconstruction.

The adoption of the Political Declaration is timely and very pertinent in the current international context. Slovakia is concerned about the growing number of reported breaches of IHL and attacks on civilians and civilian objects in current military conflicts, particularly in Ukraine.

In Russian Federation's illegal, unprovoked and unjustifiable aggression against Ukraine, which Slovakia condemns in the strongest possible terms, the Russian forces use all categories of conventional weapons very often in a manner that does not comply with IHL. Actions of Russian forces cause unspeakable suffering to innocent civilians, including children, destroy civilian objects and infrastructure. We are appalled by the most recent attacks on the Ukraine's civilian energy infrastructure. Slovakia stands with Ukraine and supports its territorial integrity, independence and sovereignty within its internationally recognized borders.

We strongly support efforts to strengthen compliance and improve implementation of applicable IHL with the aim to protect the civilians. This Political Declaration aims to achieve just this. The Declaration is not aim in itself, but the vehicle to bring tangible results on the ground to the lives of civilians caught up in conflict. We need to strive to achieve broad adherence to this Declaration to achieve global impact.

We believe improvement of national policies and strengthening international cooperation, including through exchange of expertise as well as good policies and practice, could contribute to achieving our common objective and strengthen the protection of civilians. The commitments in the area of victim assistance, risk education and explosive remnants of war should mitigate humanitarian consequences arising from the use of explosive weapons in populated areas.

We are committed to the implementation of the Political Declaration also through the regular collective follow-up process.

Slovakia stands ready to contribute.

I thank you for your attention.