**Preparatory Meeting Report: Oslo Political Declaration Conference on Explosive Weapons in Populated Areas (EWIPA)**

**Date:** April 9th, 2024

**Location:** Abuja-Nigeria

**Objective:** To garner Nigeria’s political will and active participation in endorsing the Political Declaration on Explosive Weapons in Populated Areas (EWIPA) to enhance the protection of civilians in armed conflicts and mitigate the impact of explosive weapons on civilian populations.

**Introduction and Welcome Remarks:** The meeting convened on April 9th, 2024, in Abuja, Nigeria, with 30 participants introduced and welcomed by Ms. Mimidoo Achakpa, the National Coordinator of the International Action Network on Small Arms (IANSA) Nigeria Women Network. Ms. Achakpa expressed gratitude to the International Network on Explosive Weapons (INEW) for their support and urged participants to freely engage in discussions to achieve the meeting objectives.

**Goodwill messages-**

1. **Shane Rice-Deputy Head of Mission, Embassy of Ireland Nigeria**

Mr. Shane Rice conveyed Ireland's strong support for efforts aimed at protecting civilians from the devastating impact of explosive weapons. He reaffirmed Ireland's commitment to advocating for international cooperation to address this pressing humanitarian issue.

1. **Queen Esther Iroanusi- Political Development Adviser, Norweigian Embassy in Nigeria.**

Ms. Queenesther Iroanusi expressed Sweden's solidarity with Nigeria and other nations in endorsing the EWIPA declaration. She emphasized Norway's dedication to promoting peace and security globally, highlighting the importance of collective action in safeguarding civilian lives.

1. **Aisha Ibrahim- Government Liaison Head, UNOCHA**

Ms. Aisha Ibrahim reiterated UNOCHA's commitment to supporting Nigeria and other states in implementing measures to protect civilians in armed conflicts. She emphasized the crucial role of humanitarian organizations in mitigating the impact of explosive weapons on civilian populations.

1. **Ruth Ifeoluwa Bolaji- Legal Officer, ICRC-Abuja**

Ms. Ruth Ifeoluwa Bolaji emphasized the ICRC's longstanding commitment to upholding International Humanitarian Law and protecting civilians in armed conflicts. She underscored the importance of adherence to legal frameworks aimed at minimizing the harm caused by explosive weapons.

1. **Ms Pamela West- Office of the National Security Adviser (ONSA)**

Ms West expressed Nigeria's commitment to addressing the challenges posed by explosive weapons in populated areas. They highlighted the government's dedication to promoting peace, security, and the protection of civilian lives.

**Video Presentation-**

1. **Anatomy of Destruction:** This presentation provided a visual depiction of the devastating effects of explosive weapons on populated areas, highlighting the widespread destruction and harm caused to civilian populations.
2. **The laws of War-** Participants were briefed on the legal frameworks governing the use of explosive weapons in armed conflicts, emphasizing the importance of adherence to international humanitarian law to protect civilian lives.

**Protecting Civilians from use of Explosive Weapons in Populated Areas**- Participants received insights into the types and severity of effects of explosive weapons on civilians, as well as patterns of their use or launch. Calls to action were made by the IANSA Women Network Nigeria for Nigeria to publicly acknowledge the need to address the severe harms caused by explosive weapons and to endorse and embed recommendations for their avoidance in national policies and practices. Additionally, participants were urged to encourage greater state endorsement of the declaration and to initiate steps toward implementing its commitments, including policy revisions, training, and designation of government focal points.

**Legal and policy considerations on explosive weapons in populated areas- (ICRC)**

The presentation by the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) covered the scope of the issue, direct and indirect effects, and the legal framework under International Humanitarian Law (IHL). Prohibitions outlined in the IHL framework include indiscriminate attacks, disproportionate attacks, area bombardment, and obligations of parties to conflicts to take all feasible precautions in attacks.

Position of the ICRC/RC movement- The ICRC emphasized the significant likelihood of indiscriminate effects of explosive weapons with wide impact areas in populated areas. Despite the absence of an express legal prohibition for specific types of weapons, the ICRC advocates for avoiding the use of such weapons in populated areas due to the grave civilian harm they cause.

**Discussion Highlights:**

1. **Contextualising the issue-** Participants delved into the grave humanitarian consequences of explosive weapons in populated areas, emphasizing the urgent need for action to protect civilians in armed conflicts.
2. **Nigeria’s Role and Responsibility**- The meeting underscored Nigeria's pivotal role in endorsing the EWIPA declaration, highlighting the country's commitment to mitigating the impact of explosive weapons on civilian populations.
3. **Strengthening international cooperation-** Participants discussed the importance of international cooperation and collaboration to address the challenges posed by explosive weapons in populated areas effectively.
4. **Civil society engagement**- Emphasis was placed on the critical role of civil society organizations in advocating for the protection of civilians and mobilizing support for the EWIPA declaration.
5. **Policy and legal frameworks-** Discussions centered on the need for robust policy and legal frameworks at both national and international levels to regulate the use of explosive weapons and minimize civilian harm.

**Conclusion-** The meeting bore witness to resounding expressions of international solidarity and featured enlightening presentations underscoring the imperative to shield civilians from the dire consequences of explosive weaponry. Participants actively engaged in fruitful dialogues and pledged tangible measures to endorse and actualize the EWIPA declaration, thus bolstering civilian safeguarding during armed conflicts. The preparatory assembly in Abuja, Nigeria, marked a significant milestone in garnering Nigeria's support for the EWIPA declaration. With a renewed commitment to prioritizing civilian protection in conflicts, Nigeria is poised to make substantive contributions to global endeavors aimed at alleviating the impact of explosive weapons on civilian populations.

Nigeria’s commitments to the EWIPA declaration will epitomize a comprehensive approach to safeguarding civilians in armed conflicts involving the deployment of explosive weaponry in inhabited areas. These commitments encompass legal, policy, training, accountability, and humanitarian dimensions, showcasing Nigeria's steadfast dedication to advancing civilian protection and upholding international humanitarian principles. The meeting concluded with the adoption of resolutions enscapulated in a communique attached to this report.

Ms. Mimidoo Achakpa delivered the closing remarks, extending gratitude to all participants for their invaluable contributions and steadfast dedication to the cause of shielding civilians from the devastating impact of explosive weapons. She expressed appreciation for their time and unwavering commitment to the meeting's Objectives.