

Report on the Africa Regional Workshop on Strengthening the Protection of Civilians from the Use of Explosive Weapons in Populated Areas

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Overview of workshop

Article 36, together with the Government of Austria and the Government of Ghana, convened an Africa Regional Workshop from 14–15 April 2026 in Accra, Ghana, with state representatives from across the African continent and other key stakeholders including civil society and international organisations (the ICRC, the UN Office for Disarmament Affairs - UNODA, and the UN Institute for Disarmament Research - UNIDIR). The workshop was organised in close partnership with the Foundation for Security and Development in Africa (FOSDA) and the Ghana National Commission on Small Arms and Light Weapons.

It focussed on building support for the *Political Declaration on Strengthening the Protection of Civilians from the Humanitarian Consequences Arising from the Use of Explosive Weapons in Populated Areas* as a framework that can help reduce harm to civilians living through armed conflict (see www.ewipa.org). The workshop aimed to do this by building dialogue among states, civil society, and international organisations across Africa to encourage the endorsement and implementation of the Declaration and enhance regional cooperation in addressing the issue.

This report summarises reflections and recommendations from the workshop. This synthesis report is not intended to suggest agreement or con-

sensus on the conclusions that it draws. It is a report on behalf of Article 36 but it is informed by the contributions of workshop participants. We appreciated the active engagement of all participants in the discussions.

Background context

The use of explosive weapons in populated areas (EWIPA) continues to cause devastating harm to civilians, including deaths, injuries, displacement, and destruction of essential infrastructure such as hospitals, schools, power networks and water systems. These impacts are especially acute in conflict-affected settings including Gaza, Sudan, Ukraine, Myanmar, Lebanon, and the eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), where civilians suffer long-term consequences when populated areas are subjected to bombing and shelling.

To address this, states – together with support from the UN, ICRC, and civil society – have developed the Political Declaration on Strengthening the Protection of Civilians from the Humanitarian Consequences Arising from the Use of Explosive Weapons in Populated Areas, adopted in Dublin in 2022. By the time of this workshop, more than 90 states had endorsed the Declaration, with Nigeria having become the latest endorser in the lead-up to the workshop. To date, fifteen African states have endorsed the Declaration,¹ including Lesotho, Malawi, Morocco, Nigeria, Sierra Leone, and Somalia who all participated in the workshop; other participating countries indicated active national consultations underway on endorsement including the DRC, Ghana and Mozambique.

The Declaration aims to strengthen civilian protection during conflict, aligning with African Union goals under Agenda 2063, the Silencing the Guns initiative, the Kigali Principles, and the Safe Schools Declaration. Though not legally binding, it represents a strong political commitment to reduce harm and promote changes in military policy and practice. It calls on endorsing states to adopt national policies that respond to the immediate and long-term impacts of explosive weapons.

Africa is not immune to the effects of explosive weapon use in populated areas. Active conflict involving the use of explosive weapons in towns and cities continues in the eastern DRC, Sudan, the Sahel, the Lake Chad Basin, Somalia and parts of the Horn of Africa. These dynamics undermine development, contribute to insecurity, drive cross-border displacement, and risk hampering progress toward the Sustainable Development Goals. The AU Peace and Security Council, the 2017 Maputo Communiqué, and

¹ 15 African states have endorsed the Declaration: Cabo Verde, Central African Republic, Comoros, Côte d'Ivoire, Kenya, Lesotho, Liberia, Madagascar, Malawi, Morocco, Nigeria, Senegal, Sierra Leone, Somalia, Togo. See: <https://ewipa.org/endorsement>

a recent dedicated decision of the Council have all recognised the urgency of addressing these harms and called on member states to engage with the Declaration.

By endorsing the Declaration, African states can play a key role in setting new global norms to reduce harm to civilians and further the AU's vision of a peaceful and prosperous continent.

Summary of discussions

The workshop demonstrated growing African engagement with the Political Declaration on Strengthening the Protection of Civilians from the Humanitarian Consequences Arising from the Use of Explosive Weapons in Populated Areas and increasing recognition of the urgent need to address civilian harm resulting from bombing and shelling in towns and cities. Discussions reflected both the humanitarian urgency of the issue and the practical relevance of the Declaration as a framework for military policy and practice, civilian harm mitigation, victim assistance, data collection, and regional cooperation.

Participants repeatedly underlined that the humanitarian consequences associated with the use of explosive weapons in populated areas, which are both predictable and recurring. Across discussions, participants reflected on the devastating direct and reverberating effects seen in different contexts including Sudan, the eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo, Somalia, the Sahel and elsewhere: civilian deaths and injuries, displacement, destruction of homes and infrastructure, contamination from unexploded ordnance, disruption of healthcare and education, food insecurity, and long-term developmental impacts. Participants stressed that these harms undermine broader peace, security and development objectives across the continent, including those reflected in Agenda 2063 and the African Union's Silencing the Guns initiative.

The workshop also highlighted increasing political momentum toward endorsement of the Declaration in Africa. Ghana announced that a cabinet memorandum on endorsement was at drafting stage and that endorsement was anticipated within the second quarter of 2026, building on Ghana's national consultative meeting held in February 2026. Mozambique reported that a national consultation held in October 2025 had fed into a formal feasibility assessment now en route to its Council of Ministers, while Namibia signalled that an internal submission to Cabinet would be initiated following the workshop. Uganda welcomed the Declaration in its entirety, while Zambia and Angola described existing national institutional structures that could support engagement. Nigeria, having recently endorsed the Declaration, shared early implementation measures including the Nigerian Air Force's Civilian Harm Mitigation and Response Action Plan and associated military training efforts. Lesotho shared reflections from its

own endorsement process following the February 2025 Johannesburg regional workshop, illustrating how sustained regional engagement can directly support endorsement efforts.

Lesotho, Malawi, Morocco, Nigeria, Sierra Leone and Somalia shared experiences as endorsing states, outlining progress on national processes leading to endorsement of the Declaration, military training reforms including for fighting in built-up areas, legal and policy reviews, weapons procurement policies aligned with the Declaration's commitments, inter-ministerial coordination, and active participation in international processes.

A recurring theme throughout the workshop was that endorsement should be understood not as an endpoint, but as the beginning of an ongoing process of implementation, operational adaptation, institutional learning and regional cooperation. Participants repeatedly emphasised the importance of translating political commitments into practical measures capable of reducing civilian harm in military operations. Discussions explored changes to doctrine, military training, procurement policies, targeting processes, collateral damage estimation methodologies, civilian harm tracking mechanisms, after-action review procedures, and operational planning in populated areas. Particular attention was given to the importance of restricting or refraining from the use of explosive weapons with wide area effects in populated areas as a central preventive measure reflected in the Declaration.

Strong support was also voiced for data-driven implementation, including the use of civilian harm tracking, operational review and feedback processes to inform military conduct, targeting policies and lessons-learned procedures. Reflecting this, participants from the SADC region signalled interest in a follow-up sub-regional workshop focused on civilian harm tracking and operational learning among military officials — including possible case studies drawn from the DRC context. Participants noted that such practical implementation-focused exchanges could both strengthen operational approaches to civilian protection and provide additional entry points for supporting endorsement among states still considering their position.

Participants also stressed the importance of strengthening coordination across governments and institutions. Multiple discussions highlighted the need to improve engagement between diplomatic actors, military practitioners and political leadership, including through national consultations and inter-ministerial coordination processes. Existing institutional structures — including national IHL committees, mine action centres, small arms commissions and focal point mechanisms linked to related humanitarian disarmament instruments — were repeatedly identified as practical entry points for implementation and coordination, rather than creating parallel structures that risk duplication or reporting fatigue.

The workshop further highlighted the importance of data collection and civilian harm tracking as foundations for effective policy and operational change. Participants explored how civilian casualty data, operational reviews, civilian reporting portals and lessons-learned processes can help inform military planning and improve civilian protection outcomes. The importance of age- and sex-disaggregated data, accountability mechanisms, and reliable methodologies for documenting harm was repeatedly emphasised.

Participants also underlined that implementation of the Declaration extends beyond military policy and operations to include victim assistance, humanitarian access, explosive ordnance risk education, mental health and psychosocial support, and long-term recovery support for affected communities. Discussions highlighted the value of integrating EWIPA implementation with existing humanitarian disarmament and protection frameworks, including the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention, Convention on Cluster Munitions, Arms Trade Treaty, Safe Schools Declaration, disability rights instruments and regional African Union frameworks.

Strong support was expressed for continued African leadership and regional engagement on the issue. Participants emphasised the important role that the African Union, ECOWAS, SADC and other regional bodies can play in sustaining momentum, promoting endorsement and supporting practical implementation. Particular attention was drawn to ECOWAS's ongoing development of its first regional Protection of Civilians policy, with support from the ICRC, which participants identified as an important opportunity to integrate EWIPA-related principles into regional peace and security frameworks in West Africa. The announcement of a forthcoming African Union and ICRC regional workshop in Addis Ababa later in 2026 was welcomed as an important opportunity to deepen regional engagement and maintain political momentum toward the 2027 international follow-up conference.

Civil society organisations, international organisations and participating endorsing states repeatedly reiterated their readiness to provide technical, operational and policy support to states considering endorsement and implementation, including through national workshops, military-to-military exchanges, technical briefings and support for policy review processes.



Opening and framing sessions

The opening session brought together representatives from Austria, Ghana, Article 36 and FOSDA, to reaffirm the urgency of the issue and build momentum for wider endorsement and implementation across the continent. The opening session was chaired by **Theodora Williams, Executive Director of FOSDA**.

Dr Adam Bonaa, Executive Secretary of the Ghana National Commission on Small Arms and Light Weapons, opened the workshop by stressing the humanitarian urgency surrounding the use of explosive weapons in populated areas. Drawing parallels from Gaza, Sudan, the eastern DRC, Ukraine, Lebanon and the Sahel, he underlined that wherever explosive weapons are used in towns and cities, civilians bear the heaviest and most enduring burden – with families displaced, hospitals reduced to shells, water and power infrastructure destroyed, and recovery deferred for years. Recalling Africa's tradition of preserving humanity in warfare, he called on the continent to be not a passive recipient of global humanitarian norms but an active and principled voice in shaping them. Dr Bonaa reaffirmed Ghana's commitment to provide leadership of the process, starting by endorsing the Declaration and proposed that participants take home a shared 'Accra commitment' to push for endorsement across the continent.

H.E. Ambassador Jürgen Heissel, Austria, welcomed participants on behalf of Austria as co-host, and underlined that partnership between governments, the UN, the ICRC and civil society has been key to the success of

Above: Participants in the Regional Workshop, Accra, Ghana.

humanitarian disarmament instruments. He situated the EWIPA Declaration alongside the Mine Ban Convention, the Convention on Cluster Munitions and the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons as instruments that prevent and remediate human suffering through the establishment of norms. He recalled that on average 90 percent of victims of explosive weapons in populated areas are civilians – often half of them children – and that ongoing conflicts including in Sudan demonstrate how Africa is particularly affected, with development gains and the Agenda 2063 vision at risk. Welcoming Nigeria's recent endorsement, he noted that 15 African states and 91 states globally have now joined the Declaration. Ambassador Heissel underlined Austria's long-standing commitment to humanitarian disarmament and the protection of civilians, including as a priority of its UN Security Council campaign for 2027–2028, and stressed the need to defend the multilateral framework on which small and medium-sized states particularly depend.

Laura Boillot, Director of Article 36, set out the rationale for the workshop. She underlined that the harm to civilians from the use of explosive weapons in towns and cities is not accidental but predictable and preventable, with consistent and well-documented patterns of civilian casualties, damage to homes, schools and hospitals, and disruption of essential services. She noted that the longer-term, reverberating effects are equally significant and increasingly visible across African contexts where they intersect with broader development challenges. The Declaration, she argued, is not only a political commitment but a practical framework that can help inform policy, planning and operations in ways that better protect civilians. Boillot welcomed Nigeria's recent endorsement of the Declaration as an important and timely step, and underlined the value of continued African leadership in shaping how the international agenda is taken forward.

Hon. Ebenezer Okletey Terlabi, Deputy Minister for the Interior of Ghana, delivered the keynote address. He described the Declaration as a landmark instrument in global efforts to address civilian harm and underlined that, while non-binding, its moral and political weight is considerable, and its alignment with Africa's own peace and security frameworks makes it directly relevant to the continent. He confirmed that Ghana had initiated the process of endorsement and would seek to do so within the shortest possible time. While Ghana has not experienced the scourge of explosive weapons in armed conflict, he recalled the tragic incidents at Apiate (2022) and Konongo (2025) as a reminder that civilian protection from explosive harm is a peacetime concern as much as a conflict one. The Deputy Minister called for a whole-of-government and whole-of-society approach to civilian protection, and committed Ghana to constructive engagement and to championing the values of human dignity in every available forum.

The framing session on the humanitarian impact of EWIPA and relevance of the Declaration for Africa, chaired by **Julia Eberl of Austria's Permanent Mission in Geneva**, was opened with the ICRC video on explosive weapons in populated areas. It then heard interventions from Norway, Sierra Leone, UNODA and Mozambique.

H.E. Ambassador John Mikal Kvistad, Norway, recalled Norway's deep engagement in the development and negotiation of the Declaration and underlined the importance of multilateral solutions, including for smaller states. He reflected on the 2024 Oslo follow-up conference, which reinforced the message that progress depends on partnership, transparency and sustained political will. Norway underlined that the Declaration is not about prohibiting weapons but about how weapons are used, and praised African states' historic role in championing humanitarian disarmament.

Zainab Rogers, Sierra Leone, brought the Declaration home to a national context, reflecting on Sierra Leone's eleven-year war in which mortars, rockets and improvised explosive devices were used in densely populated communities, contributing to over 500,000 deaths and mass displacement. Sierra Leone was among the first group of states to endorse the Declaration in Dublin and continues to advocate for stronger international action. Sierra Leone is active in the Geneva-based Group of Friends and emphasised that the Declaration is a policy framework for implementation rather than an abstract instrument.

Juliana Helou van der Berg, UNODA, situated the Declaration within the broader UN protection of civilians agenda. She recalled that the issue was first formally identified by the UN Secretary-General as a distinct protection concern in 2009, and that the language of his successive reports has evolved from documenting harm towards firm recommendations on policy and operational change. She underlined that the Declaration is one of several mutually reinforcing tools, and that capacity-building, dialogue and knowledge-sharing – such as this workshop – are central to UNODA's role.

Rosalina João Cossa, Mozambique, reflected on her country's long experience of armed conflict – from the sixteen-year civil war and resulting landmine contamination through to the current crisis in Cabo Delgado, where the use of improvised explosive devices since 2017 has killed over 2,000 people, displaced more than 500,000 and prevented over 13,000 children from attending school. Mozambique has ratified the Kampala Convention on Internally Displaced Persons and adopted a national displacement policy in 2021. Mozambique is currently considering endorsement of the Declaration through inter-ministerial consultations.

Session 1. Regional experiences and humanitarian impacts of explosive weapon use

Chaired by **Carl Sowah of the Ghana National Commission on Small Arms and Light Weapons**, this session heard expert presentations on the direct, indirect and reverberating effects of explosive weapons in populated areas, drawing in particular on the experiences of the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Sudan.

Joseph Dube, Disarmament and Arms Control, opened by recalling the ICRC's work on African traditions in the preservation of humanity during warfare, noting that the values underlying the Declaration draw on long-standing African traditions and have been translated into international humanitarian law. He set out the technical characteristics of explosive weapons of concern – including bombs, rockets, artillery, mortars and air-dropped munitions – and explained why their blast, fragmentation and wide-area effects make them especially dangerous when used in towns and cities. Dube also drew attention to the regional pattern of harm, including in Sudan where hospitals and other infrastructure have been destroyed, and to the growing role of urbanisation in shaping how conflicts are fought.

Léon Muanji Mbuyi, DRC, described the catastrophic impact of conflict in the eastern DRC, where escalation in the fighting led to a recorded 7,000 civilian fatalities and over 3,000 injured, and where 48 hospitals are no longer operational. Major cities including Goma and Bukavu have been without electricity and water. By the time of the workshop, more than 5.3 million people had been displaced in North and South Kivu, with around 130,000 children unable to access education. Reverberating effects include unexploded ordnance contamination of farmland and forests, with farmers and children at particular risk. The government, working with UN partners and the ICRC, is engaged in clearance, military capacity-building on ammunition management, and the Washington and Luanda processes towards a ceasefire.

Mustafa Mohammed, Sudan, presented Sudan as one of the most severe contemporary examples of the humanitarian consequences of explosive weapons use in populated areas. Since April 2023, more than 10 million people have been internally displaced, over 5 million have fled to neighbouring countries, and more than 25 million people require humanitarian assistance. Explosive weapons have been used in residential neighbourhoods, markets, hospitals and critical infrastructure, with reverberating effects including the collapse of health services, food insecurity and long-term displacement. He drew particular attention to the role of heavily armed non-state actors, including the Rapid Support Forces, and to the role of external support and foreign fighters in escalating violence. Sudan called for stronger implementation of EWIPA commitments, including measures to strengthen the protection of civilians from the effects of

explosive weapons in populated areas, alongside efforts to address the flow of weapons to armed groups and support for state institutions.

Other reflections included:

- Complex conflict dynamics involving both state and non-state actors present significant challenges for protecting civilians, particularly in densely populated areas. Participants from a number of contexts affected by armed violence and conflict reflected on the operational challenges posed when non-state armed groups operate within civilian populations and populated areas, and discussed the implications this has for the protection of civilians and implementation of the Declaration.
- Risk education and victim assistance were identified as under-resourced but vital components of effective response. The story of children playing with an unexploded device illustrated the importance of context-specific awareness raising, including for the youngest age groups.
- Improvised explosive devices were discussed as a particular challenge, with participants noting that many components fall under the Mine Ban Treaty. Stronger controls on the access of non-state armed groups to high-grade explosives and dual-use items (including drones and fertilizers) were called for, including from manufacturers and countries of origin. Norway shared a national example, where access to fertilizers used in IED manufacture is restricted via a registration system.
- Several participants reflected on the operational and legal challenges involved in distinguishing between civilians and combatants in complex conflict environments, particularly where armed actors operate within populated areas, and emphasised the importance of credible intelligence and careful assessments in military operations. At the same time, others stressed that the Declaration's focus on state responsibility remains essential given the well-documented and recurring pattern of civilian harm resulting from the use of explosive weapons by state armed forces in populated areas.
- Attention was drawn to paragraph 4.8 of the Declaration on the role of states in promoting adherence to its commitments by armed groups they have contact with, and recalled the role of the Arms Trade Treaty in preventing diversion.

Session 2. Changes to military policies and practices to strengthen the protection of civilians

This session, chaired by **Laura Boillot of Article 36**, focussed on how the Declaration's commitments translate into practical changes in military doctrine, planning, training and operational practice. Presentations drew on the experiences of Malawi as an early endorsing state, of Somalia as a state operating in a complex counter-insurgency environment, and on the ICRC's policy guidance for armed forces.

Caroline Baudot, ICRC, set out five commitments in the Declaration of particular relevance to armed forces: reviewing and adapting policies and practices in line with international humanitarian law; restricting and refraining from the use of explosive weapons with wide area effects in populated areas; investing in training and exercises that prepare forces to operate in built-up areas while protecting civilians; reviewing weapons procurement policies; and collecting and analysing data on civilian harm. She underlined that an 'avoidance policy' on the use of wide-area effect weapons in populated areas is, in the ICRC's view, the most effective preventative measure given the high likelihood of indiscriminate effects. Baudot encouraged each armed force to undertake its own review against the Declaration's provisions: examining whether overall doctrine on urban warfare exists, whether it covers wide area effects, whether training curricula reflect current evidence on direct and reverberating harm, and where the gaps are. She highlighted training and the development of restrictions on use as actions that can be taken immediately, and pointed to AMISOM's earlier indirect fire policy as evidence that change is possible in active conflict settings.

Brigadier General Dan Kuwali, Malawi Defence Force, set out ten specific steps Malawi has taken in implementing section 3 of the Declaration:

- Understanding that the Declaration does not replace the Geneva Conventions or Additional Protocols, but closes gaps and reinforces implementation – including through an avoidance policy on indiscriminate weapons in urban areas.
- Building on Article 82 of Additional Protocol I, expanding the role of legal advisors to include risk analysts and engineers in operational planning, and adding an explicit obligation for after-action reviews to capture lessons learned.
- Strengthening dissemination of IHL in peacetime to both military and civilian audiences, in line with Article 83.
- Adapting doctrine on Fighting in Built-up Areas (FIBUA) so that adversaries are pushed out of populated areas wherever possible, and inte-

grating EWIPA into training including positive identification of military objectives, and into multi-country exercises within the SADC region.

- Procurement policies that restrict weapons banned under international law and explicitly seek to avoid acquisition of weapons with wide area effects.
- Engagement with non-state armed groups – through interlocutors such as Geneva Call – to seek their commitment to comply with IHL.
- Recognition of urbanisation as a structural driver of EWIPA harm, and corresponding emphasis on the obligations under Article 58(b) of Additional Protocol I to keep military objectives away from populated areas.
- Active participation in humanitarian disarmament treaties (the ATT, Convention on Cluster Munitions, etc.) as part of an integrated, dashboard approach.
- Reviewing the ‘principles of FIBUA’ so that they align with contemporary IHL – including by challenging the principle that ‘all available firepower’ should be used in built-up areas.
- Embedding IHL at the highest level of grand strategy, defence policy and military doctrine, including through promotion exam requirements that make IHL knowledge a condition for advancement.

Captain Mohamed Adan Kahie, Somalia, presented Somalia’s perspective on strengthening civilian protection in a complex counter-insurgency environment, where the Somali National Army has faced sustained attacks from Al-Shabaab and, more recently, ISIS. After noting devastating incidents such as the October 2017 truck bombing in Mogadishu, he set out four areas of focus: the operational context (urban and semi-urban operations against non-state actors embedded in civilian populations); civilian protection measures (intelligence-led operations, targeting verification, IHL integration); challenges (resource constraints, coordination gaps, real-time intelligence); and lessons learned (the centrality of community engagement, the importance of data and tracking, and the need for institutional mechanisms such as incident tracking and ‘pat-plus’ investigations). Somalia’s priorities going forward include establishing focal points, developing a civilian harm tracking system, and creating a national action plan on EWIPA.

Other reflections included:

- Participants shared examples of national and operational frameworks related to the protection of civilians in military operations, including approaches that integrate civilian protection considerations into operational planning, evaluation and deployment procedures.
- Questions were raised regarding who determines which weapons systems are acquired and used, including how procurement policies, weap-

ons design and the availability of certain munitions can shape operational choices and civilian harm risks.

- Participants also discussed issues related to oversight of rules of engagement, the relationship between the Declaration and asymmetric forms of warfare, and how to ensure that political authorities understand and support implementation efforts undertaken by armed forces.
- A recurring theme throughout the discussions was that doctrine alone is insufficient to drive meaningful change, and that effective implementation requires political engagement and institutional support. Participants noted that military doctrines are ultimately shaped by political leadership and that discussions on EWIPA implementation therefore need to extend beyond technical and military specialists.
- The importance of cross-government coordination, as well as cooperation between governments and external partners, was repeatedly highlighted. It was noted that national reviews of policies and practices can also help armed forces identify and communicate to political authorities what is required to operationalise political commitments.
- Questions were also raised regarding the extent to which IHL and EWIPA-related principles are systematically integrated into military education and training institutions across the continent. In response, it was observed that while the character of warfare may evolve, the applicable legal framework remains constant, and that the Political Declaration can serve as an important practical tool to help bridge gaps between existing legal obligations and operational practice by providing clearer policy guidance and operational direction aimed at reducing civilian harm. Participants also emphasised that strengthening implementation depends on strong institutions, accountability, and continued regional engagement and exchange.

Session 3. Data collection and tracking civilian harm

Chaired by **Caroline Baudot of the ICRC**, this session highlighted how data collection on the use and impact of explosive weapons is central to improving civilian protection and operational decision-making. Speakers underscored the need for data not only as a record of harm, but as a foundation for change.

Katherine Young, Explosive Weapons Monitor, presented the headline findings of the Monitor's forthcoming annual report. Civilian deaths from explosive weapons in 2025 remained alarmingly high: at least 22,500 civilian fatalities recorded, including more than 12,000 in Gaza. While the global figure decreased compared with 2024, this was largely a function of

the scale of harm in Palestine and Lebanon the previous year; in the rest of the world civilian deaths increased marginally, driven by continued conflict in Ukraine, Myanmar, Sudan, Syria and Yemen. The Middle East accounted for over 60% of recorded civilian fatalities, with Africa, Asia and Europe accounting for roughly equal shares of the remainder, and around 3,000 civilian fatalities recorded in Africa. 78% of civilian deaths were caused by air-launched explosive weapons, including drone strikes and air-dropped bombs. Attacks on healthcare with explosive weapons decreased compared with 2024, while attacks on education with explosive weapons increased by more than 50%, and attacks on humanitarian aid by 61%. The use of explosive weapons contributed to food insecurity in at least 15 countries and territories.

Barbara Morais Figueiredo, UNIDIR, focussed on how data can be leveraged to support implementation of the Declaration. She underlined that the documentation of harm by civil society, the UN and the ICRC over more than a decade was a key driver of recognition of the issue and of the development of the Declaration. Effective implementation requires understanding how harms occur, how they manifest, and the multiple pathways – immediate and reverberating – through which they affect civilians. Data collection, analysis and sharing are critical across all stages of military operations: planning, decision-making, execution, post-strike damage assessment and lessons learned. UNIDIR has explored the synergies between the Declaration and other instruments – including the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention, the Convention on Cluster Munitions and the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities – particularly on age- and gender-sensitive victim assistance.

Muhammad Nasir, Government of Nigeria, opened by reaffirming that Nigeria had endorsed the Political Declaration in fulfilment of pledges made at the 34th International Conference of the Red Cross and Red Crescent. He focussed on four areas: the Nigerian Air Force's recently announced Civilian Harm Mitigation and Response Action Plan (CHMR-AP); the role of data in translating policy commitments into measurable action; considerations relating to implementation and coordination; and priorities for the way forward. The CHMR-AP is built on principles of distinction, proportionality and precaution, and is supported by a governing board and a dedicated training course for military personnel. Nasir highlighted the importance of standardised methodologies, data verification, integration of data into planning and review processes, and constructive engagement with regional and international partners. He acknowledged real operational challenges – including resource constraints, the difficulty of distinguishing combatants from civilians in counter-insurgency settings, and the use of drones and high-grade weapons by non-state armed groups – but reaffirmed Nigeria's commitment to evidence-based policy.

Other reflections included:

- The relationship between data and accountability was discussed in detail, including how published data can support advocacy, name-and-shame approaches, and the work of the International Network on Explosive Weapons (INEW).
- Sex- and age-disaggregated data, in line with paragraph 4.8 of the Declaration, was highlighted as essential to understanding differential impacts on women, men, girls, boys, older people and persons with disabilities.
- Participants acknowledged the significant challenges involved in obtaining reliable and independently verified casualty data during armed conflict, including situations where parties to conflict dispute or present differing accounts of civilian harm. Verification methodologies including geolocation, identification of victims, and corroboration with multiple sources were discussed as ways to mitigate this. The Explosive Weapons Monitor disaggregates its data by state and non-state user to support analysis of patterns and accountability.
- Civilian harm reporting portals were highlighted as a good practice that some states have adopted to allow civilians and organisations to report allegations of harm and that can feed into lessons-learned processes.
- Participants noted that some of the strongest civilian harm mitigation measures historically emerged in counter-insurgency contexts, where operational effectiveness and mission success depend heavily on maintaining the confidence and support of civilian populations.

Session 4. Assistance to conflict-affected communities

Chaired by **Hilary Kiboro Muchiri of the ICRC** delegation to the African Union, this session focussed on the role of victim assistance, humanitarian access, clearance and risk education in the implementation of the Declaration. Participants agreed that assistance must be driven by the needs of affected communities, with an emphasis on non-discrimination, timely support, and long-term care. Challenges persist, including those of humanitarian access in conflict zones when explosive weapons are being used, and the funding constraints on national systems and humanitarian responders.

Antoine Renard, Humanity & Inclusion (HI), opened the session with a reminder of the impact of explosive weapons on human bodies, minds and the services they rely on. Direct effects include amputations, fragmentation injuries, blast injuries to lungs, brain and ears, and disproportionate

harm to children whose body weights make them especially vulnerable. Less visible but equally important are the psychological consequences: a study of Syrian refugees in Jordan in 2016 found that 80% of those injured by explosive weapons reported high psychological distress, and 75% of children under five assessed in some contexts reported being so afraid that nothing could calm them down. Renard set out the four core humanitarian and victim assistance commitments of the Declaration (paragraphs 3.5, 4.4, 4.5 and 4.6) and presented findings from a two-year project which focussed on humanitarian access; healthcare; explosive ordnance risk education and conflict preparedness; and disability, gender and age inclusion. Recommendations included flexible, multi-year humanitarian financing; mental health and psychosocial support from the acute phase; investment in survival of local actors; and inclusive programming co-designed with women, persons with disabilities and affected communities.

Bobby Mudenda, Zambia Mine Action Centre (ZMAC), shared Zambia's approach. Although Zambia did not experience full-scale war, it was contaminated through hosting freedom fighters during regional liberation wars. ZMAC, located within the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, coordinates humanitarian demining, victim assistance, mine risk education and stockpile destruction across five pillars of mine action. Mudenda described a national statutory committee comprising permanent secretaries from relevant ministries, partnerships with the Ministries of Health, Community Development, Agriculture and Defence, and risk education materials targeted at school children – including specific content for younger pupils after experience showed older children might withhold information from authorities. Zambia's relationship with the ICRC and Japan as partners was also highlighted, including a forthcoming prosthetics centre.

Colonel Silas Kamanda, Uganda, set out Uganda's approach to assistance, framed by the country's hosting of nearly 2 million refugees – the largest refugee population in Africa – many fleeing EWIPA-affected conflicts in South Sudan, Somalia, Eritrea, the DRC and Sudan. He described Uganda's tiered response (life-saving, scaling, resilience and systems integration) and progressive refugee policies including land allocation, freedom of movement and access to national services. He shared 2025 response highlights – 145,000 new refugee registrations, 26,000 children supported through child protection programmes, 608,000 refugees receiving monthly food assistance – and underlined that EWIPA implementation would be of direct benefit to Uganda by reducing displacement at source.

Claudio Crispim, Government of Angola, reflected on Angola's experience as a country with a long history of armed conflict and on the costs of war, including the long process of rebuilding hospitals, schools and roads destroyed during conflict. Angola followed and supported the negotiation of the Declaration and welcomed the growing number of African endorsements, encouraging continued awareness-raising and capacity-building among African states.

Other reflections included:

- Several delegations raised the challenge of funding shortfalls, including the impact of donor cuts on humanitarian responders and on national victim assistance frameworks. Working with and through local organisations and victims' groups was identified as a key part of any sustainable response.
- Participants highlighted the importance of inter-agency cooperation between relevant national bodies, including mine action centres, military authorities, foreign affairs ministries and other government institutions. The need to avoid creating parallel reporting and institutional structures that could contribute to "reporting fatigue" was also emphasised. In this regard, several participants suggested that designating national focal points within existing mechanisms — such as national IHL committees and focal point structures linked to the ATT, UN Programme of Action, Convention on Cluster Munitions and Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention — may provide one of the most practical and efficient approaches for supporting coordination and implementation.
- Discussions also drew attention to existing good practices and to the relevance of other international frameworks, including disability rights instruments and victim assistance obligations under related conventions, which can support implementation of the Declaration.
- Participants proposed further exploration of practical synergies between the EWIPA Declaration and related international instruments and processes, including through more coordinated approaches to reporting, data collection and risk education, with the aim of reducing burdens on states and strengthening coherence across implementation efforts. It was also noted that work examining such synergies is already underway in relevant policy and research forums.
- Examples were shared of community-based risk education methodologies, including outreach in local languages, school-based education programmes, training-of-trainers approaches, and mass communication through radio and printed materials.

Session 5. African leadership and regional engagement with the EWIPA Declaration

Chaired by **Theodora Williams of FOSDA**, this session explored how African regional frameworks, national processes and existing institutions can be used to promote endorsement and implementation of the Declaration, aligning with Africa's broader peace and development goals.

Gyebi Asante, Ghana National Commission on Small Arms and Light Weapons, spoke to Ghana's process of preparing for endorsement. He recalled that Ghana's interest in the Declaration intensified in 2025, leading to the Commission's participation in the Second International Conference of States in Costa Rica in November 2025. This was followed by an engagement with the Austrian Ambassador and FOSDA on the case for endorsement, and by a national consultative meeting on 18 February 2026. The consultative meeting brought together key stakeholders to discuss the Declaration in simple terms and the way forward. He set out Ghana's lessons learned: that the Declaration is relevant beyond armed conflict (drawing on the domestic incidents at Apatte and Konongo), that it is relevant beyond borders, that endorsement strengthens national credibility without compromising sovereignty, and that endorsement should be approached as a preventive rather than reactive step. Ghana's roadmap to endorsement includes an inter-agency committee, a draft cabinet memorandum at preparation stage, and stakeholder engagement on implementation – with the aspiration of endorsement before the end of the second quarter of 2026. Ghana's planned implementation steps include a national control list to regulate dual-use items such as fertilizers, capacity-building, and a national action plan.

Tarik Batal, Government of Morocco, situated Morocco's engagement within an early endorsement and a pragmatic, operational approach to implementation. Morocco participated in the 2024 Oslo follow-up conference and the November 2025 Costa Rica conference, and recently hosted the Rabat Workshop bringing together endorsing and non-endorsing states from the region, international and regional organisations, and NGOs. He drew two lessons from the Rabat process: first, that universalisation remains essential, with each additional endorsement reinforcing the Declaration as a global reference standard – noting that of the 21 states having endorsed by 2026, only 16.4% are from Africa, compared with 43.3% from Europe and 20% from the Americas, and that only 15 of the 54 African states had endorsed at the time of the workshop. Second, that effective implementation requires national coordination – a whole-of-government approach with clear roles for civilian and military actors. The Rabat workshop also marked the official launch of the aide-mémoire for political authorities and armed forces, a practical resource for translating commitments into action developed by UN ODA.

Dr Danjuma Aku, ECOWAS, underlined that the ECOWAS peace and security agenda is anchored in the African Union's Agenda 2063 and Silencing the Guns by 2030 initiatives, and that the Declaration directly reinforces Aspiration 4 of Agenda 2063 (a peaceful and secure Africa) and pillar 1 of the ECOWAS Vision 2050. He noted that ECOWAS is currently developing its first regional Protection of Civilians policy, with the support of the ICRC delegation in Abuja, with a first session held in March 2026. He set out the relevance of the Declaration for ECOWAS operations in Banjul, Kanilai and Bissau; for the response to over 8 million refugees and IDPs across the region; and for member states such as Ghana, Benin, Côte d'Ivoire, Nigeria and Togo facing the spillover effects of conflict in Burkina Faso. ECOWAS is in consultation with these states to provide financial support of up to USD 1 million each. Aku proposed leveraging the ECOWAS Committee of Chiefs of Defence Staff to harmonise military doctrine on EWIPA, and noted ECOWAS's annual military training on explosive weapons at the 'CPADD' (Centre de Perfectionnement aux Actions post conflictuelles de Déminage et Dépollution, Center for Humanitarian Demining Training) in Ouidah, Benin. He called on manufacturers and countries of origin to prevent diversion of high-grade explosive weapons to non-state armed groups, and for naming-and-shaming mechanisms for states that continue to use explosive weapons against civilian populations.

Ambassador Limam El Jalil Aall Brahim, African Union, placed the Declaration within the framework of Agenda 2063 and the Silencing the Guns initiative. He set out the unique challenges of armed conflict in Africa – conflicts fought in cities and populated areas, irregular groups that do not follow international law, limited military capacity, inadequate data systems and weak accountability mechanisms. He recalled that the AU Peace and Security Council had, in a recent dedicated decision, encouraged AU member states that have not yet done so to endorse the Declaration; encouraged active participation in the Costa Rica conference; and reinforced that endorsement and implementation advance Africa's own priorities rather than aligning with an external agenda. He announced that the African Union Commission, jointly with the ICRC, would convene a regional workshop on the protection of civilians from EWIPA later in 2026 in Addis Ababa, providing a platform for member states to deepen understanding, share good practice and identify concrete next steps.

Other reflections included:

- Several participants asked how the commitments contained in the Declaration can be translated into concrete national actions and how progress can be measured – including through national action plans, accountability mechanisms, and the use of the Declaration's commitments as benchmarks for review.
- Participants also raised questions about how stakeholders can encourage those using explosive weapons in populated areas to view restraint not only as a legal obligation, but also as a normative and moral imperative.

- The discussion highlighted the important role that national Mine Action Centres and related national institutions can play in supporting endorsement and implementation efforts, including through existing work on universalisation, risk education, victim assistance, and coordination under related humanitarian disarmament frameworks.
- Participants further emphasised the importance of engaging women and youth in implementation efforts, reflected on the challenges and limits of universalisation processes in other international instruments, and discussed the importance of ensuring alignment between political leadership and military expertise.
- The discussion also underscored that the protection of civilians is both a humanitarian imperative and a legal and political responsibility, including within African regional frameworks, and explored the role that regional cooperation and mechanisms can play in helping states address technical and resource constraints.

Session 6. Practical steps for advancing implementation and cooperation in Africa

Chaired by **Laura Boillot of Article 36**, this final session focussed on what comes next, with practical guidance on how to endorse the Declaration, how to initiate implementation, and how to cooperate to sustain momentum.

Juliana Helou van der Berg, UNODA, walked participants through endorsement and implementation in concrete terms. Endorsement is straightforward: a Note Verbale should be sent to the Government of Ireland (the depository), copied to UNODA. Sample notes are available in English, French, Arabic and Spanish. There are no formal reporting requirements and no financial obligations attached to endorsement. Endorsement does not require a state to have fully implemented the Declaration in advance: implementation is an ongoing process, and workshops such as this one and international conferences are part of that process. UNODA's framework for implementation distinguishes between the responsibilities of national political authorities (ensuring civilian protection is a political and institutional priority, and integrating commitments across systems), armed forces command (developing mechanisms to assess civilian impact, conducting lessons-learned, providing training, and promoting the Declaration in military cooperation), and the international level (participation in international and regional conferences and military-to-military exchanges). She announced an upcoming Geneva-based military expert workshop later this month in Geneva, and noted that the third international follow-up conference is foreseen for 2027.

Hilary Kiboro Muchiri, ICRC, set out what implementation entails in practice. Although the Declaration does not impose new legal obligations, it requires meaningful operational change: a review of doctrines and policies (particularly on collateral damage estimation and on the indirect effects of weapons), the integration of indirect and reverberating effects into planning, attention to weapons procurement (consistent with article 36 of Additional Protocol I), discussions with town planners and other non-military actors on civilian critical infrastructure, training, regional cooperation through joint military operations and shared understanding, and the institutionalisation of focal points within the military and other agencies. He underlined the role of regional organisations – particularly the African Union – in coordinating policy across the continent and supporting common understanding among member states.

Joseph Dube, Disarmament and Arms Control, focussed on dissemination and victim assistance. He highlighted the value of going back to capitals to promote and disseminate the Declaration nationally, drawing on the success of the 2024 SADC workshop in supporting Lesotho's endorsement and Mozambique's ongoing process. He encouraged participants to mobilise resources for workshops on data collection and civilian harm tracking (potentially using DRC as a case study), to engage their missions in Addis Ababa to participate in the AU EWIPA workshop, and to ensure that delegations to international meetings are well-briefed and confident to engage on the issue.

In the open discussion, participants identified concrete steps each could take in the coming months:

- Participants discussed a range of practical and strategic steps for advancing endorsement and implementation of the Declaration within Africa. Suggestions included aligning implementation efforts with existing continental peace and security frameworks; analysing patterns among endorsing states to support more tailored regional advocacy; and using existing national coordination bodies, such as national IHL committees, rather than creating parallel institutional structures.
- The discussion also highlighted the importance of ensuring that political commitments and regional decisions are translated into operational practice, including among military commanders and planners responsible for conducting operations. Participants emphasised the importance of maintaining the issue on the agenda of the African Union and other regional forums on a sustained basis.
- Participants further noted that slow progress toward endorsement can stem from insufficient coordination and understanding between diplomatic, military, and political actors at national level, and stressed the importance of bringing these communities together through national consultations and implementation processes.

- Several participants highlighted the value of pairing endorsement with concrete implementation measures, including civilian harm mitigation policies, operational guidance, and training initiatives. Participants also encouraged states to use upcoming regional and international meetings — including the planned 2026 Addis Ababa workshop on EWIPA and the 2027 international follow-up conference — as practical milestones for advancing endorsement and implementation efforts.

Closing remarks

In his closing remarks, **Ambassador Jürgen Heissel of Austria** offered three takeaways. First, that the Declaration is a practical agenda – a toolbox covering military policy and practice alongside humanitarian and civilian protection measures, with implementation understood as an ongoing process building on synergies with other instruments. Second, that regional cooperation – experience-sharing, peer learning and African-led approaches – is at the heart of advancing this agenda. Third, that participants would be leaving Accra not only with ideas but with concrete next steps. He highlighted the upcoming Austria/UNODA workshop in Geneva for military experts from endorsing states; the Protection of Civilians week at the UN Security Council in New York; and the third international follow-up conference in 2027.

H.E. Mr Francis Danti Kotia, Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Regional Integration of Ghana, closed the workshop on behalf of the Government of Ghana. He thanked Austria, Article 36, FOSDA and partners, and underlined that the discussions had moved from principles to practical actions: how to strengthen national policy frameworks, how to support practical implementation, and how to embed the Declaration's commitments in regional processes. Recalling that no single actor can address these challenges alone, he committed Ghana to advancing the agenda and to working with partners to strengthen the protection of civilians, measured – as he put it – not in words but in practice, and ultimately by whether fewer civilians suffer the consequences discussed in Accra.

Outcomes and recommendations

African states have a critical opportunity to shape implementation of the Political Declaration through their leadership and active participation in the international process of work to strengthen the protection of civilians from the use of explosive weapons in populated areas. Workshops such as this one play a vital role not only in advancing national processes, but also in fostering broader support for reducing the devastating harm caused by explosive weapons in populated areas among states and organisations who can work together on this issue.

Commitments made

Participants welcomed the momentum generated by the Accra workshop and several states made concrete pledges:

Participants welcomed the momentum generated by the Accra workshop and several states, regional organisations and partners outlined concrete commitments, national processes and follow-up initiatives.

Endorsement processes and national engagement

- Ghana confirmed that a cabinet memorandum on endorsement was at drafting stage and signalled the aim of endorsement within the second quarter of 2026, with leadership from the Ghana National Commission on Small Arms and Light Weapons in coordination with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Ministry of Interior, FOSDA and other key stakeholders.
- Mozambique reported that a national consultation held in October 2025 had fed into a formal feasibility assessment now before the Council of Ministers, with endorsement targeted within the year.
- Namibia signalled that an internal submission to its Ministry and onward Cabinet process would be initiated following the workshop.
- Uganda welcomed the Declaration in its entirety and reflected on its direct relevance given the impact of displacement from conflicts involving explosive weapons use across the region.
- Angola and Zambia, while not announcing endorsement timelines, described existing national institutional structures that could support future engagement and implementation.

Operational practice and implementation measures

- Nigeria – having recently endorsed the Declaration – reaffirmed its commitment to implementation, including through the Nigerian Air Force’s Civilian Harm Mitigation and Response Action Plan, an accompanying governance board, and a dedicated training course for military personnel.
- Somalia outlined priorities including establishing national focal points, developing a civilian harm tracking system, and creating a national action plan on EWIPA.
- Malawi shared a range of implementation measures including doctrinal reforms related to fighting in built-up areas, integration of EWIPA into military training and operational planning, procurement approaches aimed at avoiding weapons with wide area effects, and strengthened dissemination of IHL.
- Lesotho, Morocco, Sierra Leone and other endorsing states shared lessons from endorsement processes, legal and policy review, inter-ministerial coordination and participation in international follow-up processes.

Regional and international initiatives

- ECOWAS confirmed that it is developing its first regional Protection of Civilians policy with the support of the ICRC, and that it would explore using the Committee of Chiefs of Defence Staff to harmonise approaches related to EWIPA across the region.
- The African Union, jointly with the ICRC and Article 36, confirmed plans to convene a regional workshop in Addis Ababa later in 2026 to deepen continental engagement on the Declaration.
- Participants from the SADC region expressed interest in a possible follow-up workshop focused on civilian harm tracking and operational learning among military officials, including potential case studies drawn from African contexts.
- Austria announced an upcoming Geneva-based workshop with UNODA for military experts from endorsing states and reaffirmed its commitment to supporting African engagement through to the 2027 international follow-up conference.

Technical support and cooperation

- Article 36, FOSDA, ICRC, Humanity & Inclusion, the Explosive Weapons Monitor, UNIDIR, UNODA and other organisations reiterated their readiness to support national consultations, military engagement, technical reviews, workshops and implementation processes.

Challenges identified

Despite progress, participants highlighted key challenges:

- Participants identified a number of political, operational, technical and humanitarian challenges affecting efforts to strengthen protection of civilians from the use of explosive weapons in populated areas.
- Awareness and understanding of the Declaration among political authorities, parliamentarians, military actors and other stakeholders remains limited in many contexts, contributing to slow endorsement processes and misconceptions regarding the implications of endorsement.
- Disharmony between diplomatic actors, military practitioners and political leadership at national level was identified as a recurring obstacle to advancing endorsement and implementation processes.
- Contemporary conflicts involving non-state armed groups operating within populated areas continue to pose significant operational and legal challenges, including difficulties related to distinction, intelligence, urban operations, and the increasing use of improvised explosive devices, drones and other explosive weapons by armed groups.
- Participants nevertheless stressed that the Declaration's focus on state responsibility remains essential given the recurring and well-documented pattern of civilian harm resulting from the use of explosive weapons by state armed forces in populated areas.
- Technical and institutional capacity constraints were identified in a number of areas, including civilian harm tracking, operational review and lessons-learned systems, data verification methodologies, implementation coordination, and integration of EWIPA-related issues into military doctrine and training.
- Participants highlighted concerns regarding the creation of parallel reporting or coordination structures that may duplicate existing mechanisms or contribute to reporting fatigue, stressing instead the importance of building on existing national frameworks and institutions.
- Funding shortfalls, constraints on humanitarian access, and pressure on humanitarian and victim assistance systems continue to affect conflict-affected communities and implementation efforts across the region.
- Participants also noted that only fifteen African states had endorsed the Declaration by the time of the workshop, underscoring the importance of sustained regional engagement, peer outreach and continued political leadership.

Next steps and follow-up actions

Building on the discussions held in Accra, participants identified several practical next steps to support endorsement and implementation of the Declaration across Africa.

Endorsement

States that have not yet endorsed the Declaration are encouraged to formally endorse it by transmitting a Note Verbale to Ireland (as depositary), copied to UNODA, in accordance with the model notes available in English, French, Arabic and Spanish on the www.ewipa.org website, including in connection with the planned AU/ICRC workshop in Addis Ababa later in 2026 and the 2027 international follow-up conference.

National-level work and coordination in non-endorsing states

States were encouraged to:

- Designate national focal points to support endorsement and implementation of the Declaration, including through inter-ministerial engagement and coordination with civil society and international partners;
- Organise national consultative meetings — along the lines of those held in Mozambique, Lesotho, Ghana and elsewhere — drawing on support available from organisations and other states to build momentum and strengthen understanding among national stakeholders;
- Brief political authorities and parliamentarians, and align the Declaration with existing national peace, security and development priorities; and
- Make use of existing coordination structures — including national IHL committees, Mine Action Centres and Small Arms Commissions — to support implementation efforts, integrate EWIPA into relevant agendas, and strengthen military education and training.

Military engagement

Participants emphasised the importance of restricting or refraining from the use of explosive weapons with wide area effects in populated areas as a key preventive measure for reducing civilian harm.

Participants also highlighted the need for armed forces to:

- Review and adapt military doctrines, procurement policies, rules of engagement, operational planning processes and training curricula, including through integrating the Declaration into curricula at regional peacekeeping training centres such as CPADD in Benin;
- Expand military-to-military exchanges, including through the upcoming Geneva workshop;

- Develop and resource civilian harm tracking and response frameworks, civilian reporting mechanisms and operational review procedures; and
- Institutionalise focal points, after-action reviews and lessons-learned systems capable of informing ongoing policy and operational adaptation over time.

Participants also encouraged the use of the AU Committee of Chiefs of Defence Staff and equivalent bodies to support regional exchange and harmonisation of approaches.

Assistance and recovery

Participants highlighted the importance of strengthening support to conflict-affected communities through risk education, victim assistance, mental health and psychosocial support, humanitarian access and long-term recovery assistance.

Regional action

African Union structures (including the Peace and Security Council and AU Commission), ECOWAS (including the Committee of Chiefs of Defence Staff and Mediation and Security Council), SADC and other RECs were encouraged to play a stronger role in promoting endorsement and implementation, including by integrating EWIPA into peace and security agendas, communiqués and ministerial-level discussions.

International advocacy

African states were encouraged to engage actively at upcoming multilateral forums — including the UN Security Council’s open debate on the protection of civilians, the UN General Assembly First Committee, and the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons — and to participate in the Addis Ababa AU/ICRC/Article 36 workshop later in 2026 and the 2027 international follow-up conference.

Civil society and UN support

Article 36, FOSDA, ICRC, Humanity & Inclusion, Explosive Weapons Monitor, UNIDIR, UNODA and other organisations offered to provide technical expertise, briefings, resources, and support for national visits and workshops to sustain momentum.

Annex A. Agenda

Africa Regional Workshop on Strengthening the Protection of Civilians from the Use of Explosive Weapons in Populated Areas 14–15 April 2026, Accra, Ghana

Day 1. Tuesday 14 April 2026

09:30-10:15	Opening remarks and introductions Overview of the workshop's purpose and objectives, including welcoming remarks from hosts and partners, followed by a round of participant introductions.	Moderator: Theodora Williams, FOSDA Austria – H.E. Ambassador Jürgen Heissel Ghana National Commission on SALW – Dr. Adam Bonaa Article 36 – Laura Boillot Keynote address: Ghana – Hon. Ebenezer Oklety Terlabi, Deputy Minister for the Interior
10:15-11:00	Framing remarks: The humanitarian impact of explosive weapons in populated areas and relevance of the EWIPA Political Declaration for Africa <i>What are the humanitarian consequences of explosive weapon use in populated areas globally, and how does this issue relate to current challenges in African contexts?</i> <i>What led to the development of the EWIPA Political Declaration, and what are the key commitments that states have made through it?</i> <i>Why is engagement with the Declaration relevant for African states today, including in relation to protection of civilians, military practice, and regional cooperation?</i>	Moderator: Julia Eberl, Austria <i>ICRC video on explosive weapons in populated areas</i> Norway – H.E. Ambassador John Mikal Kvistad Sierra Leone – Zainab Rogers UN ODA – Juliana Helou van der Berg Mozambique – Rosalina João Cossa
11:00-11:30	Coffee break and group photo	
11:30-13:00	Session 1. Regional experiences and humanitarian impacts of explosive weapon use <i>What are explosive weapons and what effects do they have? Why are they of particular concern when used in an urban environment?</i> <i>What are the direct and indirect/reverberating effects and how do civilians experience this in the short and long-term?</i> <i>What are some examples of use and impact in the region?</i>	Moderator: Carl Sowah, Ghana National Commission on Small Arms and Light Weapons Disarmament & Arms Control – Joseph Dube DRC – Léon Muanji Mbuyi Sudan – Mustafa Mohammed
13:00-14:00	Lunch (provided)	

14:00-15:30	Session 2. Changes to military policies and practices to strengthen the protection of civilians <i>What commitments in the Declaration are most relevant for military doctrine, planning and operational practice?</i> <i>What policies, doctrine or operational guidance do militaries already have in place related to urban warfare and civilian protection?</i> <i>How can the Declaration be used as a practical tool to strengthen operational approaches to protecting civilians?</i>	Moderator: Laura Boillot, Article 36 ICRC – Caroline Baudot Malawi – Brig. General Dan Kuwali Somalia – Captain Mohamed Adan Kahie
15:30-16:00	Coffee break	
16:00-17:00	Session 3. Data collection and tracking civilian harm <i>How can collecting and sharing data on civilian harm improve understanding of the impacts of explosive weapons and inform better policies and operational responses?</i> <i>What are some examples of how this has been used in practice in the conduct of military operations?</i>	Moderator: Caroline Baudot, ICRC UNIDIR – Barbara Morais Figueiredo Explosive Weapons Monitor – Katherine Young Nigeria – Muhammad Nasir
18:00-20:00	Reception hosted at the Austrian residency	

Day 2. Wednesday 15 April 2026

09:30-11:00	Session 4. Assistance to conflict affected communities <i>What are the needs of conflict-affected communities following explosive weapon use?</i> <i>What commitments in the Declaration relate to victim assistance, humanitarian access, clearance and risk education?</i> <i>How can national authorities and humanitarian organisations work together to strengthen assistance and recovery efforts?</i>	Moderator: Hillary Kiboro Muchiri, ICRC Humanity & Inclusion – Antoine Renard Zambia – Bobby Mudenda Uganda – Col. Silas Kamanda Angola – Claudio Crispim (intervention)
11:00-11:30	Coffee break	
11:30-13:00	Session 5. African leadership and regional engagement with the EWIPA Declaration <i>How does the EWIPA Political Declaration relate to key policy, security, protection and development priorities across Africa?</i> <i>What is the current status of engagement with the Declaration across the region, including national positions and recent regional initiatives?</i> <i>What opportunities exist to advance engagement with the Declaration at national, sub-regional and African Union levels?</i>	Moderator: Theodora Williams, FOSDA Ghana National Commission on Small Arms & Light Weapons – Dr. Gyebi Asante Morocco – Tarik Batal ECOWAS – Danjuna Aku African Union – Amb. Limam El Jalil Aall Ibrahim
13:00-14:00	Lunch (provided)	

14:00-15:00	Session 6. Practical steps for advancing implementation and cooperation in Africa <i>What practical steps can states take to begin implementing the commitments of the EWIPA Political Declaration?</i> <i>How can states, regional organisations and humanitarian actors cooperate to support implementation and share good practice?</i> <i>What priorities for follow-up and regional collaboration could help sustain engagement with the Declaration in Africa?</i>	Moderator: Laura Boillot, Article 36 ICRC – Hillary Kiboro Muchiri, ICRC Disarmament and Arms Control – Joseph Dube UN ODA – Juliana Helou van der Berg
15:00-15:10	Closing remarks	Moderator: Laura Boillot, Article 36 Ghana – H.E. Mr. Francis Danti Kotia, Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Regional Integration Austria – H.E. Ambassador Jürgen Heissel

Annex B. List of participants

State delegates

Angola

Claudio Roberto Henriques Crispim – Director Adjunto da Autoridade Nacional para O Controlo de Armas e Desarmamento (ANCAD), Ministry of National Defence

Austria

Amb. Jürgen Heissel – Austrian Ambassador, Ghana
Julia Eberl – Counsellor, Permanent Mission of Austria in Geneva

Benin

Lieutenant Colonel Djimon Sahgui – Director of Centre de Perfectionnement aux Actions post conflictuelles de Déminage et Dépollution / Center for Humanitarian Demining Training (CPADD)

Cameroon

Lieutenant Colonel Eric Martin Dingom Komon – 21st Engineering Regiment Commander, Ministry of Defence

DRC

Léon Muanji Mbuyi – Head of the Disarmament Office at the Directorate of International Organizations, Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Democratic Republic of Congo.

Djibouti

Iltireh Ibrahim Farah – Chief Advisor of the Minister, Ministry of Defence

Egypt

H.E. Wael Fathy – Ambassador of Egypt, Ghana

Ghana

Hon. Ebenezer Oklety Terlabi – Deputy Minister, Minister for the Interior
H.E. Mr. Francis Danti Kotia – Coordinating Director for Multilateral & International Organizations, Ministry of Foreign Affairs
Lt Col. Ampadu Banasco – Engineer Military Officer at Ministry of Defence, Ghana Armed Forces
Lt Col. Issah Tahiru – Acting Commander of Ghana Army School of Ammunition and Explosives (GASAE), Ghana Armed Forces

Lesotho

Thabiso Senyotong – Legal Officer, Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Relations

Malawi

Brigadier General Dan Kuwali – Head, Policy and Plans, Ministry of Defence

Mali

Colonel Adama Diarra – Permanent Secretary for the Fight Against the Proliferation of Small Arms and Light Weapons

Morocco

Tarik Batal – Desk Officer, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, African Cooperation and Moroccan Expatriates

Mozambique

Captain Coutinho Ernesto Francisco – Ammunition Depot, Ministry of Defence
Rosalina João Cossa – Department Head, Ministry of Justice, Constitutional Affairs and Religious

Namibia

Col. Piteimo Haiyanyula – Chief Legal Officer, Ministry of Defence

Nigeria

Muhammad Nasir – Principal Foreign Affairs Officer, Ministry of Foreign Affairs

Norway

Ambassador John Mikal Kvistad – Ambassador of Norway to Ghana, Norwegian Embassy in Accra

Sierra Leone

Zainab Rogers – Second Secretary, Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Cooperation

Somalia

Captain Mohamed Adan Kahie – Head of Joint Tactical Operation Cell, Somali National Army

Sudan

Mustafa Mohammed – Diplomat, Ministry of Foreign Affairs

Uganda

Colonel Silas Kamanda – Legal Advisor, Directorate of Legal Affairs

Zambia

Bobby M. Mudenda – Assistant Director Operations, Zambia Mine Action Center

Organisations and international bodies

African Union

Amb. Limam El Jalil Aall Brahim – Senior Officer on Peace and Security, None

Article 36

Laura Boillot – Director
Megan Wiseman-Searle – Operations Coordinator

Disarmament and Arms Control

Joseph Dube – Director, South Africa

ECOWAS

Dr Danjuma Aku – Programme Officer, ECOWAS Commission

Explosive Weapons Monitor / INEW

Katherine Young – Monitoring and Research Manager

Foundation for Security and Development in Africa (FOSDA)

Ali Ibraheem – Programmes Officer
Theodora Williams – Executive Director

Ghana National Commission on Small Arms and Light Weapons

Dr. Adam Bonaa – Executive Secretary
Gyebi Asante – Deputy Director
Abdul Jaleel Suleiman – Head of Programmes
Carl Anyetei Sowah – Head of Communications & Media
Joana Naa Ahinakwa – Assistant Research Officer

Ghana National Red Cross Society

Eric Kwatia – Secretary General

Humanity & Inclusion

Antoine Renard – Technical Head of Programmes

International Action Network on Small Arms (IANSA)

Johnson Asante-Twum – Managing Director

International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC)

Alcidio Siteo – Legal Advisor, Mozambique

Caroline Baudot – Policy Adviser, Switzerland

Hillary Kiboro Muchiri – Deputy Head of Delegation and Legal Advisor, Ethiopia

National Peace Council

Dr. George Amoh – Executive Secretary

Mohammed Ghali Salam – Deputy Executive Secretary

Protection

Ayman Sorour – Executive Director

The United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research (UNIDIR)

Barbara Morais Figueiredo – Researcher

The West Africa Action Network on Small Arms (WAANSA)

Beatrice Baiden – Youth, Gender, Peace & Security Advisor

UN Office for Disarmament Affairs (ODA)

Juliana Helou van der Berg – Political Affairs Officer

West Africa Centre for Counter-Extremism (WACCE)

Enoch Agombire Aya-ari – Research and Programmes Officer

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About Article 36.

Article 36 is a specialist non-profit organisation, focused on reducing harm from weapons. We partner with civil society groups and governments to develop new policies and legal standards to prevent civilian harm from existing and future weapons.

www.article36.org

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