**JOINT CIVIL SOCIETY STATEMENT ON HUMANITARIAN DISARMAMENT**

**UNGA First Committee**

**October X, 2024**

This statement is read on behalf of XX civil society organizations and coalitions from around the world.

After a year of horrific bloodshed that has challenged the rules and norms we hold most dear, putting people at the heart of our work is more important than ever.

Humanitarian disarmament prioritizes the protection of people in conflict. Its central objective is to prevent and address human suffering and environmental damage caused by arms, through the establishment of international norms.

Momentum to negotiate a legally binding instrument on autonomous weapons systems has increased since last year. The UN Secretary-General’s report based on last year’s resolution 78/241 included substantive contributions from a wide range of stakeholders. This year’s resolution on autonomous weapons should be easy to support for all states wanting to ensure humans retain control over the use of force and see real progress towards a much-needed treaty on AWS.

In April 2024, the first international follow-up conference on the Explosive Weapons in Populated Areas (EWIPA) Declaration was held in Oslo, Norway. Despite this success, there is more work to do. With current ongoing conflicts and extreme use of explosive weapons in populated areas, we call on all states that haven’t already endorsed to do so without delay. Endorsing states should fully implement and promote the Declaration.

Amid appalling threats of nuclear weapons use, the TPNW now counts half of UN members as signatories or states parties, and efforts towards universalisation and treaty implementation - including toward justice for the victims of nuclear weapons use and testing, continues. A new nuclear arms race is diverting resources from other global challenges, and it is urgent to reverse course before the unthinkable occurs.

The international community is increasingly recognizing the urgent need to address the environmental impacts of armed conflicts and military activities, in part responding to the documented harm in recent conflicts.

The past year has also been a reminder of the enormous challenges we face. We deplore Lithuania’s announcement to withdraw from the Convention on Cluster Munitions and call on the Government of Lithuania to remain a state party.

Use of antipersonnel landmines and cluster munitions is contrary to the strict norms established by both the Mine Ban Treaty and the Convention on Cluster Munitions. We call upon states to defend these norms, and by doing so prevent the harm that prompted these norms in the first place.

Finally, all those involved in humanitarian disarmament should ensure their work takes into account inclusion, diversity and intersectionality and addresses racial and gender discrimination. This inclusion extends to civil society. States must protect our access to meetings and our role as a necessary part of the international ecosystem, to ensure that the work done in these rooms has real world impact.

Going forward, and especially in these times of tensions and wars, we as a community need to be unified, and continue to put people at the centre of our work. The joint goal to prevent and remediate human suffering should drive a cooperative, inclusive and progressive agenda.

Thank you.

**Supporting Global Campaigns**

**Other Supporting Civil Society Organizations**