

Statement on behalf of the Conflict and Environment Observatory and Norwegian People's Aid, delivered as part of Humanity in War's Third State Consultation on IHL and peace.

5 Feb 2026

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Thank you for the opportunity to take the floor, I'm speaking on behalf of my organisation, the Conflict and Environment Observatory, and our partners Norwegian People's Aid. Together we've spent a decade working to mainstream the environment in humanitarian disarmament. Today, I'll offer examples of how disarmament instruments can support this, and of gaps still requiring our attention.

Reducing the footprint of mine action, proofing it against climate risks, and identifying potential environmental and climate adaptation gains from clearance activities make reconnecting mine action with the environment a priority. In this, disarmament instruments have been important vehicles for change, with the Mine Ban Treaty's 2024 Siem Reap five-year Action Plan a turning point. It's being supported by an updated International Mine Action standard and new national standards, by a sectoral working group, and by new tools, such as the Green Field Tool. This year's 3rd Review Conference for the Convention on Cluster Munitions could also prove to be another important milestone.

The use of explosive weapons in populated areas inflicts not only immediate humanitarian devastation but also acute and long-term environmental damage. Implementing the 2022 EWIPA Declaration could reduce both humanitarian and environmental harm. For example, states could ensure that environmental considerations are fully integrated into military planning, and in determining the acceptability of actions. And they could also support environmental data collection in affected areas, using it to inform harm reduction policies.

Disarmament instruments like these provide frameworks for articulating environmental considerations. But the environment is never a priority, and gains are always hard fought. Elsewhere, other intersections between disarmament and the environment are highlighting gaps in discourse, in understanding, and in the law and in its implementation.

Reflecting on the environmental impact of armed drones in 2017, we focused on the expansion of the use of force, and whether their sensors could potentially reduce collateral environmental harm. Massed drone warfare, and its novel environmental threats, wasn't on our radar.

We now see frontlines blanketed with millions of kilometres of plastic fibre optic cables; with it comes habitat disruption; microplastic pollution and e-waste; the dispersal of toxic and persistent chemicals; and the obstruction of firefighting and mine action. It's critical for disarmament that we're able to predict the environmental risks from emerging military technologies but does IHL do this effectively enough?

Military activities are responsible for around 5.5% of global greenhouse gas emissions; emissions from conflicts can exceed the combined annual output of multiple countries.

Conversations on military emissions are taking place within and between militaries, and on the fringe of UNFCCC events, but should they also be part of disarmament discourse?

Last year's ICJ advisory opinion underscored the common obligation on all states to address climate change and the risks it poses. So when it comes to conflict emissions, should this include how IHL can protect the atmosphere, and ecosystem-based carbon sinks?

Global military spending is at an historic high and growing, diverting money from addressing environmental risks and, in many cases, actively exacerbating them, including through increased greenhouse gas emissions. The climate damage caused by this spending will cost our societies and economies billions annually. Remedying this goes far beyond IHL but without integrating the environment into disarmament discourse and instruments, we undermine the potential contribution that both IHL and disarmament more broadly, can play in protecting people and our common environment.

Thank you.

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