THE FIRST STATE CONSULTATION ON UPHOLDING INTERNATIONAL HUMANITARIAN LAW IN THE USE OF INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGIES DURING ARMED CONFLICTS

We would like to thank the ICRC as well as the co- leaders of today's work stream for their leadership and valuable contributions.

While we explore the subject of upholding IHL in the use of ICTs during the Armed Conflict, we need to recognize both the most eminent challenges and threats that the use of ICTs possess and their transformative potential for humanitarian work, prevention, detection, monitoring as well as accountability for violations of IHL.

Digital technologies can be instrumentalised to spread disinformation and misinformation, extreme forms of hate speech, incitement to violence and war. Although the concept of 'hate speech' lacks a universally agreed legal definition, there is a clear and urgent need for effective mechanisms to prevent and ensure accountability for incitement against protected groups, dehumanization of minorities, warmongering and the spread of racist rhetoric. In the era of social media, parties to armed conflict and their proxies utilize ICT tools for targeted attacks against individuals in situation of extreme vulnerability. For example, accessing the data or even the mobile phone of a captured servicemen or even civilian, allows getting in contact with family members, sending threats, blackmailing and simply spreading terror.

We agree with the speaker, that the misuse of ICTs has a harmful effects during the armed conflicts, including on the Prisoners of war, who are protected by the IHL. Unfortunately, in some cases prisoners of war and others deprived of their liberty are not only made a subject for public curiosity by sharing their data, videos and personal information, they can simply be put on display and treated as military trophies in a most degrading and inhumane manner.

UN machinery made use of digital technologies during pandemic to distantly monitor areas, including in certain cases, humanitarian settings, and utilized the information for reporting. Member states as well as the humanitarian partners can discuss the possibility and standards for using digital technologies in humanitarian work. In the same vain, digital technologies may be used for constant monitoring of protected objects such as cultural and religious sites.

In the meantime, as artificial intelligence continues to evolve rapidly, its potential for wide-scale application has grown substantially across various sectors. While these advancements are impressive, they also raise concerns particularly in the context of their use in modern warfare.

Armenia reaffirms that international law particularly IHL is fully applicable to all weapon systems, including those incorporating artificial intelligence and autonomous technologies. As an essential first step toward ensuring compliance with IHL in relation to Lethal Autonomous Weapon Systems, it is imperative that any such systems incapable of being used in accordance with the

core principles of IHL namely distinction, proportionality, and precaution must be prohibited. Systems that function without context-appropriate human control and judgment should be considered impermissible.

To this end, ensuring that humans retain meaningful responsibility and accountability in the development and deployment of AI technologies in the military domain is of paramount importance. Decision-shaping and decision-making as well as obligations of responsibility and accountability must remain with humans and cannot be transferred to machines.

In this regard, Armenia emphasizes the indispensable role of human judgment in the use of force and reiterates its significance in ensuring compliance with international legal obligations.

Thank you.