



PHILIPPINES



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for the

WS2 FIRST CONSULTATIONS

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NATIONAL STATEMENT

Thank you, Chair, for giving me the floor.

We again commend the ICRC and the co-convenors of the Global Initiative for creating a valuable platform to advance the implementation of international humanitarian law at the national level.

National IHL Committees may serve not only as advisory bodies, but also as proactive and strategic catalysts and instruments – influencing national policy and security frameworks, supporting training and doctrine, and bridging law and practice, ultimately putting IHL in public consciousness. We view this workstream as an opportunity to contribute to a collective effort to embed IHL more deeply into national institutions, and to galvanize political leadership in ensuring its full respect and implementation.

The Philippines has a longstanding tradition of engagement with IHL. The Philippines ratified and acceded to all four Geneva Conventions and its three Protocols, as well as the Convention on Cluster Munitions, the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons and its four protocols, and the Anti-Personnel Mine Convention. In recent years, we also ratified the Arms Trade Treaty (ATT) in 2022, CCW Protocol V on Explosive Remnants of War in 2022, and the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons (TPNW) in 2021. Domestically, the Philippines has national legislation upholding the principles of International Humanitarian Law, such as the “*Philippine Act on Crimes Against International Humanitarian Law, Genocide, and Other Crimes Against Humanity*” (Republic Act 9851), “*The Red Cross and Other Emblems Act of 2013*” (Republic Act 10530), and the “*Special Protection of Children in Situations of Armed Conflict Act*” (Republic Act 11188).

However, legal frameworks are nothing but expressions of mere aspirations if not operationalized. Thus, in 1999, we established an ***ad hoc National Committee on IHL***, which carried out critical awareness and commemorative activities on IHL. Co-chaired

by the Department of Foreign Affairs and the Department of National Defense and composed of key government agencies, the ICRC, civil society, and academia, the *ad hoc* Committee was instrumental in promoting IHL awareness and inter-agency cooperation. Among its key initiatives were the conduct of IHL training for government officials at the Foreign Service Institute, in partnership with the ICRC, which helped strengthen understanding of IHL across government institutions. It also led annual observances of IHL Day — including thematic symposiums on emerging technologies and IHL, as well as outreach activities in conflict-affected communities. The *ad hoc* Committee provided a crucial platform for dialogue, education, and policy coordination, and laid the groundwork for deeper institutional engagement on IHL.

Recognizing the need for a more sustained, inclusive, and strategic approach, the Philippines formalized the *ad hoc* Committee into a permanent Inter-Agency Committee on IHL (IAC-IHL) through Executive Order No. 77 just last November 2024. This Committee solidified the engagement of the key government agencies, including the Armed Forces, the Department of Justice, the Commission on Human Rights, and representatives from civil society and academia. Its mandate spans the promotion, implementation, and monitoring of IHL, coordination with domestic and international partners, and the formulation of year-round programs, including the observance of IHL Day every 12th of August. As a newly formalized body, the IAC-IHL recently finalized its Implementing Rules and Regulations, ensuring clarity in its structure, functions, and collaboration mechanisms. Thus, our National IHL Committee's role is both technical and political — serving as a platform for policy development, inter-agency coordination, and public engagement.

Yet, one question remains: why create a national IHL Committee? Beyond fulfilling a pledge to establish another governmental body, what tangible value do these mechanisms offer?

The Philippines believes that full compliance with IHL is indispensable to protecting civilians, preserving human dignity, and maintaining a rules-based international order. In an era of increasingly complex and evolving conflicts, we must strengthen national implementation mechanisms and uphold IHL - not merely as a legal duty but as a moral imperative. These rules exist to safeguard life, dignity, and humanity. They are not aspirational ideals but actionable standards that demand national ownership.

This is not about new rules. Creating National IHL Committees is about breathing new life into the rules we already have, as enshrined in the four Geneva Conventions and its Additional Protocols — reaffirming their relevance, defending their application, and reinforcing the political will to uphold them. National IHL Committees are thus about creating awareness of and learning what the rules are, and implementing them. Together, we are building a future where compliance with IHL is not the exception, but the norm.

We strongly encourage all States that have not yet done so to establish their own National IHL Committees — tailored to their national legal systems but grounded in the same commitment to uphold IHL. And for those that already have functioning mechanisms, we

call for even deeper cooperation — through open dialogue, the exchange of good practices, and more regular engagement between peers.

The power of this Workstream lies not just in collective reflection, but in collective resolve. The Philippines stands ready to work with all of you in turning commitment into structure, structure into action, and action into protection for those most affected by conflict.

Thank you.