



Schweizerische Eidgenossenschaft
Confédération suisse
Confederazione Svizzera
Confederaziun svizra

Swiss Confederation

Global IHL Initiative

IHL and Peace

(Workstream 3)

First State Consultation

Geneva, 26 May 2025

Statement by Switzerland

Madam and/or Mister Chair,

Switzerland would like to thank the ICRC, the Republic of Colombia, the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia and the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, for convening the First State Consultation on IHL and Peace under the Global IHL initiative. This First State Consultation of the IHL and Peace Workstream gives us a timely opportunity to explore the links between respect for IHL and the promotion of peace, which both constitute key priorities of Switzerland's foreign policy strategy. In its initial statement, Switzerland would like to share its view on how IHL is and can be further operationalized in mediation in order to help foster dialogue between conflicting parties and pave the way towards peace.

Switzerland considers commitments to comply with IHL can serve as effective confidence-building measures in peace processes. When parties to a conflict commit to upholding IHL obligations and follow-through with tangible actions on the ground, it helps build trust for advancing peace negotiations. Such tangible actions can include measures to improve the protection of the civilian population, such as establishing humanitarian corridors to allow for the safe passage of civilians or humanitarian aid. As a universally recognized framework, IHL helps establish common ground between conflict parties to create a safe space for dialogue and negotiations. States play a crucial

role in promoting the respect of IHL as a trust-building tool, whether as mediators, impartial third-parties or simply as members of the international community.

There are countless humanitarian issues that can be addressed in a peace process, including the search for missing persons, humanitarian access, prisoner exchanges, demining and accountability. Whether or not these issues and their related IHL obligations are referred to depends on several factors, including their urgency or prevalence in each context. It is also important to consider the potential risks that may arise by linking humanitarian issues with political negotiations, as the lack of progress on the political front may delay or block humanitarian solutions. There is no one-size-fits-all solution to this challenge. When Switzerland mediates it adopts a case-by-case approach in close consultation with peace actors and the humanitarian community, so as to ensure that respect for IHL is strengthened.

To achieve this, mediators can take concrete measures, such as making the impact of their actions clear to conflict parties, for example through testimonies of victims and survivors, or by involving IHL experts to ensure legal references are meaningfully integrated in peace agreements. It is important to recall that all parties to an armed conflict are bound to respect IHL, whether or not they are engaged in a peace process. Those mediating, facilitating or serving as guarantors of such processes, can help the parties to move from non-compliance to compliance and encourage accountability for past breaches in an agreement. When this occurs, the larger journey to peace is likely to be more sustainable.

Switzerland looks forward to further exploring the links between IHL and mediation during this First State Consultation on IHL and Peace. Thank you.