

Under the Global Initiative to Galvanize Political Commitment to International Humanitarian Law (Global IHL Initiative), **Germany, Peru, the Philippines, the United Kingdom and the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC)** are pleased to present the:

WORKSTREAM 2

REGIONAL CONSULTATIONS WITH NATIONAL IHL COMMITTEES

For representatives of national committees and similar entities on international humanitarian law (IHL) and experts from relevant ministries in capitals

Background

National committees and similar entities on IHL (national IHL committees) are advisory bodies established by governments to promote and implement IHL at the domestic level. There is no single template for national IHL committees; however, they are typically composed of representatives from key ministries involved in the implementation and application of IHL. Committee members may also come from the judiciary, the National Red Cross or Red Crescent Society and academia. National IHL committees bring together states' experts and decision makers in an interdisciplinary way to discuss priorities linked to the application of IHL, making them a powerful tool. It is therefore fitting for states to continuously ask "Are we maximizing the potential impact of our national IHL committee?"

Today, there are 121 national IHL committees across the globe. Despite this, it continues to be a challenge to ensure that IHL is implemented, understood and complied with in all conflicts and at all times. Under the Global IHL Initiative, states have the opportunity to discuss how national IHL committees can and should galvanize political action on IHL. Moreover, states can reflect together on the untapped potential of these important domestic mechanisms and propose innovative ways in which national IHL committees can further contribute to maintaining the integrity and protective power of IHL.

Instead of a second global round of consultation, this workstream proceeds through 2025 with a series of regional consultations. Three have already taken place, and three more will be held in accordance with the schedule below. Committees across the globe will have the opportunity to examine, through a regional lens, findings from previous consultations in this workstream and to ensure that regional perspectives are adequately accounted for. The next global consultation will be held at the beginning of 2026 and build on the discussions in the regional consultations.

Objectives

The objectives of the regional consultations on national IHL committees are to:

1. **provide an update on the workstream and its progress:**
 - brief participants on the findings of the first consultation as reflected in the progress report and on insights gained from parallel regional consultations
 - outline the next steps towards identifying the workstream's final recommendations
2. **understand to what extent national IHL committees are engaged in national processes** relevant to promoting respect for IHL, both domestically and with other states
3. **understand the challenges** that national IHL committees encounter
4. **gather proposals, suggestions and advice** from states on potential value-added outputs from the workstream which would be relevant in the specific region
5. **frame the future direction** of the workstream.

Next steps

The outcomes from all regional consultations held in 2025 will be presented at the next consultation with all states in early 2026, with the view to identifying concrete recommendations on how national IHL committees can maximize their impact to ensure better respect for IHL. All recommendations will be presented in the second quarter of 2026 and will be the subject of further discussions among all states.

Schedule of regional consultations

21 May 2025, Warsaw (in person)

consultation integrated into the Second Regional Conference of European National IHL Committees

2 July 2025, Brasilia (in person)

consultation integrated into the Regional Meeting of National Committees on International Humanitarian Law and Similar Bodies of the Americas

12 August 2025, Manilla (in person)

consultation integrated into the 2025 Asia and the Pacific Regional Conference on IHL

25 September 2025, Abuja (in person)

consultation integrated into the Annual ECOWAS – ICRC Review Meeting on the Implementation of International Humanitarian Law in West Africa

3 December 2025, Pretoria (in person)

consultation integrated into the 24th Annual Regional Seminar on the Implementation of International Humanitarian Law in Southern Africa and the Indian Ocean Island States

8 and 9 December 2025, Cairo (in person)

consultation integrated into the 13th Meeting of Arab National Committees on IHL

Participants

Participants are expected to be well versed in how their national IHL committee functions, or in IHL and the processes to implement it and promote respect for it in their country.

Procedure

- The consultations will take place within existing regional IHL meetings.
- We kindly ask states to come prepared to engage in discussion and brainstorming sessions.
- Participants are expected to engage in discussions as experts on national IHL committees or IHL.
- Discussions will take place in plenary or working groups.
- The working languages will be the planned working language(s) of the regional meeting into which the consultation has been integrated.
- The content of the consultations will be summarized, anonymized and compiled with the feedback received from other regions, to be published by the end of 2025. Note takers will be present to facilitate the preparation of the report, but these notes will not be made public.
- Discussions will be inclusive, constructive, non-politicized and solution-oriented throughout the consultations. While participants are encouraged to discuss their state's domestic practices during the consultations, they are kindly asked to refrain from discussing the practices of other states.
- Participants must respect the working discussions' confidentiality, which is critical to their productivity.
- When preparing for the consultation, participants are encouraged to consider the guiding questions below.
- Written responses to the guiding questions are welcomed and should be sent to ihlinitiative@icrc.org, clearly indicating "National IHL Committees workstream regional consultations" in the subject line. States not attending a regional consultation are also welcome to send their responses by email to the same address. **Unless confidentiality is explicitly requested, these statements will be published on the [Humanity in War](#) website.**

Guiding questions

Discussions should have an overall focus on the role and functioning of a state's own national IHL committee, specifically on processes related to galvanizing political action on IHL. States that do not have a national IHL committee are invited to share details of their internal processes intended to galvanize political action on IHL. States are also encouraged to discuss their hopes for the workstream. While each consultation will be tailored to the specific needs of the particular region, the general themes that will be covered are set out below with corresponding guiding questions.

Session 1: IHL implementation and the value of national IHL committees

Participants are asked to provide an update to all participants on their country's national IHL committee's achievements or IHL achievements. Participants are encouraged to share why their national IHL committee was established and what they view as their committee's added value. Participants from states without a national IHL committee are encouraged to reflect on their state's approach to implementing IHL obligations and whether there could be a role for an IHL committee in the future.

Guiding questions:

1. What steps have been taken in your state to advance respect for IHL either at home or abroad since the last meeting of this forum?
2. What motivated your state to establish a national IHL committee?
3. What have been the benefits to your state of having a national IHL committee?
4. For states without a national IHL committee, have there been any discussions in your state on the potential value of establishing a national IHL committee? If so, what factors featured in those discussions?

Session 2: Diversity in action – the role and working methods of national IHL committees

Participants will be invited to discuss the implementation of IHL obligations in their state. All present national IHL committees are encouraged to share information regarding their mandate, composition and functioning. Participants from states without a national IHL committee are encouraged to discuss their national working procedures for issues related to implementing and complying with IHL.

Guiding questions:

1. What are the mandate of your national IHL committee and its current areas of focus? Are there areas of your mandate that could be further explored? Do you feel that there is space for your committee to do more to further contribute to maintaining the integrity and protective power of IHL?
2. What are the working methods of your national IHL committee? How does it set its priorities and objectives? How does it ensure its visibility within government and with relevant external entities and decision makers? How is its work monitored?
3. What characteristics of the composition of your national IHL committee have been key to its achievements? What are the main opportunities created by these characteristics?
4. What role would your national IHL committee have in the event of an armed conflict involving your state?

5. For states without a national IHL committee, what specific approaches or practices have been adopted in your state to ensure IHL is effectively implemented? How are your state's IHL commitments monitored?

Session 3: Overcoming challenges

Participants will be invited to share their ideas and experiences related to overcoming challenges to advancing IHL implementation. All states present with a national IHL committee will be asked to reflect on specific challenges for the functioning of their committee.

Guiding questions:

1. *For states with a national IHL committee:* What challenges has your national IHL committee faced that have had an impact on its functioning or achievements?
For states without a national IHL committee: What challenges have been faced in your state that have had an impact on implementing IHL obligations?
2. *For all states:* What actions did you take to overcome those challenges? Were they successful?
3. *For all states:* What safeguards would you recommend to others to prevent the occurrence of similar challenges?
4. *For all states:* What opportunities would be useful to facilitate regional solution-finding and support? What would these look like? Which international, regional or national organizations should be included? Do any such opportunities already exist?

Session 4: The way forward for Workstream 2 of the Global IHL Initiative and national IHL committees of the region

Participants will be invited to brainstorm on their vision for Workstream 2 of the Global IHL Initiative and the future role of national IHL committees within the region. All participants are encouraged to engage in a free and frank exchange of ideas and advice.

Guiding questions:

1. What additional tools, opportunities, support or commitments would improve the functioning of your national IHL committee?
2. Would it be valuable to increase coordination among national IHL committees either at the regional or global level? Why? How should this be facilitated?
3. Does your national IHL committee have experience supporting other national IHL committees? Does your national IHL committee have capacities, either technical or material, which could be used to support other national IHL committees?
4. Are there other domestic or international entities that may offer useful lessons on ways of working to national IHL committees? Which? What aspect(s) of their functioning should be examined?
5. Do you have any proposals or ideas on the format or content of a potential value-added output from Workstream 2 of the Global IHL Initiative?

Preparatory reading

- [Global Initiative to Galvanize Political Commitment to International Humanitarian Law: Calling for Humanity to be Upheld in War](#)
- [National Committees for the Implementation of Humanitarian Law](#)
- [International Humanitarian Law at the National Level: Impact and Role of National Committees](#)
- [Practical Advice to Facilitate the Work of National Committees on International Humanitarian Law](#)
- [National Committees and Similar Entities on International Humanitarian Law: Guidelines for Success](#)
- [Online Community for National Committees and Similar Entities on International Humanitarian Law](#)