

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

THIRD ROUND OF CONSULTATIONS ON NATIONAL IHL COMMITTEES

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

MONDAY, 9 FEBRUARY 2026

9:30–13:00 (UTC+1)

FORMAT: IN PERSON (GENEVA) AND ONLINE (ZOOM)

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 comprised of representatives from key ministries involved in the implementation and application of IHL. Committee members may also come from the judiciary, the local National Red Cross or Red Crescent Society and academia. National IHL committees bring together government experts and decision makers in an interdisciplinary way to discuss priorities linked to the application of IHL, making them a powerful tool.

Through a series of regional consultations in 2025, states discussed whether they were maximizing the potential impact of their national IHL committee to ensure that IHL is implemented, understood and complied with in all conflicts and at all times. The overwhelming response was that where their national IHL committee was functioning well, the state values it, but there is scope for the committees to do more. Moreover, committee members shared their perspectives on common challenges that inhibited their ability to fully maximize their potential. Limited mandates, lack of access to decision-making forums, lack of financial and human resources, turnover in membership and fast rotation of government personnel, and insufficient prioritization of IHL were all cited as challenges that had an impact on expectations and the outputs of national IHL committees. In addition, the operational reality of the country may also affect the way the national IHL committee functions. In this respect, internal tensions, disasters, public emergencies and even the existence of an armed conflict were mentioned as additional challenges affecting the way national IHL committees may function.

To overcome these challenges, many participants proposed to further strengthen peer-to-peer support and develop additional tools to complement existing resources available to national IHL committees, such as common standards and guidance. Additionally, harnessing the collective power of national IHL committees, both regionally and globally, was frequently cited. Examples of innovative approaches developed by some committees were deemed to be useful sources of inspiration for other committees facing similar circumstances. Across regions, states agreed to continue exploring new avenues to facilitate cooperation, exchange and support among national IHL committees.

Building on these regional discussions, this consultation will seek input from states on how the workstream on national IHL committees can produce results that will support the implementation of these requests. The co-chairs have a particular interest in learning from the unique experiences and vulnerabilities of countries whose geographic, sociopolitical or humanitarian contexts pose both operational challenges and opportunities for the implementation of IHL and whose national mechanisms operate in particularly complex environments yet offer valuable lessons on adaptability, resilience and innovation in advancing respect for IHL.

Timeline of previous consultations

- **7 May 2025** (online)
Global all-state consultation
- **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, Manila** (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
- **9 December 2025, Cairo** (in person)
consultation integrated into the 13th Meeting of Arab National Committees on IHL.

Objectives

This consultation aims to:

- **provide an update on the workstream and its progress:** participants will be briefed on the findings of the second round of consultations, which took place between May and December 2025 through regional consultations with national IHL committees
- **provide a space for states and other stakeholders to discuss the actioning of requests that have arisen from the regional consultations.** The requests which the co-chairs wish to discuss further are:
 - the request for new commitments, minimum standards, tools and guidance on the functioning of national IHL committees, while respecting the value that comes from preserving the diversity between committees. In advance of the discussions, participants

are kindly requested to familiarize themselves with existing guidance documents for national IHL committees (see the “Background reading” section of this document)

- the request to facilitate cooperation, exchange and support between national IHL committees
- the request to support the technical capacity building of members of national IHL committees.

Next steps

Following the three rounds of consultations, the co-chairing states and the ICRC will formulate concrete recommendations, which will be presented to all states for further discussion:

- On **1 April 2026**, the first versions of the recommendations for all workstreams will be sent to all Permanent Missions in Geneva and published on the [Humanity in War](#) website.
- The **fourth round of consultations** will be held between **4 and 6 May 2026**, in a **hybrid format**. During this round, all states will be invited to share comments on the first versions of the recommendations for each workstream, which will be discussed sequentially.
- On **1 June 2026**, the second versions of the recommendations for all workstreams will be sent to all states and published on the [Humanity in War](#) website.
- The **fifth round of consultations** will be held between **22 and 26 June 2026**, in a **hybrid format**. All states will be invited to provide final comments on the recommendations. Following this round, the co-chairing states and the ICRC will finalize the recommendations for each workstream, which will be presented to all states in the second half of 2026.

Participants

- The consultation will be held in a hybrid format with participation in person and online.
- The consultation is **open to all states that are interested**. There is a strong preference for capital-based government representatives who are members of national IHL committees and/or personnel with experience in implementing and promoting respect for IHL in their country. We also welcome representatives from Permanent Missions in Geneva and National Red Cross or Red Crescent Societies who are active members of national IHL committees.
- At least one participant within each state’s delegation should be a representative of the government of that state.
- Please register no later than **Thursday, 5 February 2026**, [using the registration form](#).

Procedure

- The working languages will be **Arabic, Chinese, English, French, Russian and Spanish**, with simultaneous interpretation.
- We ask participants to limit their statements to **four minutes** to ensure sufficient time for all participants to take the floor. At the end of the consultation, and after all participants that wish to contribute have done so, states and other participants will be given an opportunity to discuss ideas proposed by others.
- When preparing their statements, participants are kindly requested to consider the **guiding questions** provided in the agenda below.

- The **inclusive, constructive, non-politicized and solution-oriented** nature of the discussions will be maintained throughout the consultation. While participants are encouraged to refer to their state's domestic practice during the consultations, they are asked to kindly refrain from discussing specific contexts or the practice of other states.
- To facilitate interpretation, we invite participants to share a copy of their statements by **5 February 2026**, via email at ihlinitiative@icrc.org, with "National IHL committees – February 2026 consultation" in the subject line. We also encourage participants to send their full written statements by email after the meeting. **Unless confidentiality is explicitly requested, these statements will be published on the [Humanity in War](#) website.**
- The consultation will be recorded, but the recording will not be made public.

Background reading

- [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](#)

Agenda

National IHL Committees Third Round of Consultations

09:30–13:00, 9 February 2025
ICRC Humanitarium, 17 avenue de la Paix, 1202 Geneva

**Depending on the number of statements given, all times set out below are subject to change.*

Registration / Log-in and connection	9:00–9:30
Opening of the meeting and introduction	9:30–10:00
<p>Discussion</p> <p>States are invited to share views on the guiding questions proposed below. Breaks will be taken as needed depending on the number of requests for the floor.</p> <p>Guiding questions</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Common purpose: Would you support the development of a common purpose paper for national IHL committees, as suggested by some national IHL committees? If so, what common commitments could be included to enhance the work of national IHL committees?2. International cooperation: How should international solidarity and exchanges between national IHL committees be facilitated? Should some form of membership platform, organization or secretariat be established, (or for existing platforms) strengthened or repurposed? If so, what could this look like and what objectives could it have?3. Monitoring: How could the effectiveness of national IHL committees be monitored?4. Capacity-strengthening: How could the capacity-strengthening of national IHL committee members be facilitated? How could national IHL committees work together to develop an online toolkit containing training material, templates and a compilation of good practices?5. Do you have other proposals for maximizing the potential of national IHL committees?	10:00–12:30
Concluding remarks and next steps	12:30–13:00