

Chairs,  
Ambassadors,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,

I would like to thank the co-chairs of this group, Australia, Austria, Kenya and the United Arab Emirates, for their excellent work and contributions.

I would like to mention three points: Firstly, the development of international humanitarian law training strategies, secondly, the impact and evaluation of national measures, and thirdly, best practices to identify and manage risks of international humanitarian law violations.

**Firstly, training in IHL must reach all spheres of society.** Adoption and ownership of these principles is the keystone of preventing violations of them, and must start in peacetime.

In 2021, France adopted an IHL training plan for state-and non-state actors, drawn up and followed up by the government in liaison with the Red Cross, the National Consultative Commission on Human Rights (CNCDH), the International Organisation of La Francophonie and several NGOs.

This plan has helped strengthen training in IHL norms for all components of the French armed forces, as well as those of partners' armed forces, such as within the G5 Sahel coalition in the early 2020s and under the auspices of the UN, the EU or NATO.

It has also made training in IHL systematic for French diplomats. Online training provided by the French Red Cross is available for all French diplomats to learn about IHL. The French Red Cross and the International Committee of the Red Cross also deliver free training in Paris every year for diplomats, particularly those addressing armed conflicts and humanitarian action in their work. The sharing of the expertise and experience of French and international NGOs is also invaluable.

France shares the observation that more could be done to better spread the influence of IHL through society, including among journalists and children, as well as local elected officials and businesses.

More broadly, awareness of IHL in society requires widespread public outreach. This could take the form of a national IHL month, as suggested in the progress report. The basis – meaning the fundamental principles of IHL and humanitarian action – need to be known to all, particularly concerning the protection of humanitarian workers and the most vulnerable people who enjoy specific protection, including women, children, the elderly, people with disabilities, and displaced persons and refugees.

**Secondly, our IHL policies need to be evaluated continuously.** The French armed forces maintain a culture of post-action analysis in relation to IHL violations, through lessons learned processes and their inclusion in doctrine. Moreover, confidential dialogue with the International Committee of the Red Cross helps to identify lessons that need to be learned. This commitment is essential to incorporate and apply IHL in the everyday operation of the French armed forces.

National Red Cross societies, national IHL committees, academia and legal experts, as well as NGOs, form an ecosystem that we can draw on to produce performance indicators. In the spirit of the Global Initiative, these networks could be connected with those in other countries participating in the Initiative through regional networks and forums. These platforms would foster exchanges of best practices between States.

**Thirdly, the progress report highlights the need to identify factors leading to increased risks of IHL violations. I have in mind three factors, recognition of which could help prevent violations in the long term.**

Firstly, the use of new and emerging technology raises new ethical and legal issues. France considers that IHL applies to cyber space, but work on its interpretation is needed to adapt it to the specificities of that field. We will continue to defend this position under the UN's new Global Mechanism on developments in the field of ICTs in the context of international security and advancing responsible State behaviour in the use of ICTs, a forum in which we are seeing an ebb in consensus on this point.

Secondly, the erosion of discipline and professional ethics within certain armed forces may contribute, according to the report, to the formation of an environment of impunity. Military commanders, who are responsible for the discipline of their subordinates, have a key role to play in guaranteeing that their troops are irreproachable and guiding them day-to-day in armed conflict situations. In this respect, it is essential to have legal advisors within the armed forces to advise commanders on the application of IHL. France therefore attaches great importance to training and deploying operational legal advisers within its forces.

Thirdly, the report underlines the risks that can arise from the lack of robust national systems to investigate allegations and improper conduct, which can result in violations of IHL in armed conflicts.

The progress report highlights the fact that these systems must have the required powers and resources in order to fulfil their role as mechanisms to establish responsibilities, actively contributing to the prosecuting IHL violations. In this respect, at multilateral level, France is continuing its efforts in support of the initiative aimed at regulating veto use in the event of mass atrocities at the UN, within the United Nations General Assembly and the Human Rights Council. Moreover, it remains a constant supporter of the International Criminal Court.

These shortfalls must be addressed and we collectively need to promote greater awareness in society around IHL and education in it, so as to prevent violations in the long term, particularly the most serious ones such as deliberate attacks on humanitarian actors and infrastructure that is crucial for the survival of populations, and the use of famine and rape as war weapons.

Thank you.