

Chairs,
Ambassadors,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

I would like to thank the co-chairs of this group, Saudi Arabia, Bangladesh, Colombia, Ethiopia and Qatar, for their excellent work and contributions.

I would like to make three points:

Firstly, activities linked to protection and compliance with international humanitarian law can help foster confident dialogue between belligerents from the outset of a conflict. Conversely, violations of IHL fuel radicalization and are an obstacle on the path to lasting peace.

In this respect, France supports the role of the International Committee of the Red Cross, a neutral, impartial and independent body, in working to foster respect for IHL in armed conflicts. Its impartial action protects people affected by conflicts and helps restore family ties, find missing persons and support prisoners. The ICRC's activities concerning prisoners of war are particularly important. France is also keen to highlight the crucial role of the ICRC Central Tracing Agency in finding out what has happened to missing persons.

Secondly, we need to capitalize on the role of mediators, be they diplomats representing States, United Nations diplomats or independent actors. The progress report underlines their importance: when trained in IHL principles, mediators can infuse these obligations in peace processes. France supports inclusion of IHL in peace negotiations. As we recalled in yesterday's consultation, France applies an IHL training strategy aimed at boosting the skills of its diplomats.

The inclusion of a variety of actors also helps to ensure peace efforts last. Particular attention must be paid to women, whose participation helps to better address certain sensitive issues like sexual violence.

Thirdly, insofar as the States Parties to the Geneva Conventions have committed to identifying and prosecuting those who have committed the most serious crimes in armed conflicts, IHL also helps fight impunity. We know that addressing the need for justice is one prerequisite of a lasting return to peace.

France also stands behind the conclusions of the progress report whereby IHL obligations related to disarmament, detainee release and repatriation or resettlement, demining, safe and voluntary returns of populations, clarification of the fate of the missing, and victims' rights, are essential to building lasting peace.

In conclusion, France recalls that States must not shirk what must be a cardinal objective: ending wars. Decisions of war and peace are above all political choices. We must not lose the ambition of preventing and ending conflicts by enforcing international law, particularly the Charter of the United Nations.

Thank you.