



Inter-Parliamentary Union
For democracy. For everyone.

Global Initiative to Galvanize Political Commitment to International Humanitarian Law

Third State Consultation: Workstream “National IHL Committees”

IPU Intervention

9 February 2026

As this is the first time that the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) is taking the floor, allow us to thank the ICRC for organizing this consultation, together with the co-chairs Germany, Peru, the Philippines and the United Kingdom.

The IPU, the global organization of national parliaments, has long promoted respect for international humanitarian law (IHL) and provided its 183 Member Parliaments with expertise and technical support to implement IHL at the domestic level.

In October 2025, parliaments from all over the world adopted the Geneva Declaration on *Upholding humanitarian norms and supporting humanitarian action in times of crisis*, at the closing of the 151st IPU Assembly. The Declaration sets as one objective to prevent violations of IHL by “*supporting the establishment or strengthening of national IHL committees that assist the government in implementing, monitoring compliance with and spreading knowledge of IHL*”.

Building on this, the IPU would like to contribute to this workstream with a perspective on how parliaments can take active part in the work of national IHL committees, and on how this interaction can help maximize the potential of these committees.

Firstly, parliamentary action in support of the work of National IHL Committees is an existing practice. There are over 20 National IHL Committees today which, according to their mandate, either include parliamentary representatives in their membership or formally interact with the parliament in one way or another. Based on this practice, the IPU has highlighted national IHL committees as useful bodies for the enforcement of IHL and invited national parliaments around the world to support them and take an active part in their work.

Secondly, the representation and participation of parliamentarians, as decisions makers, in the membership and/or work of national IHL committees can strengthen the Committees’ mandate and impact. Parliaments are directly concerned with the adoption of legislation and are well placed to directly address questions to the executive through their oversight function. They can also ensure, through their budgetary powers, that the committee works well and has the financial resources it needs. For those States without a committee, parliamentarians can take action either by supporting the creation of one by legislative means or by exerting oversight on the executive branch to set one up. Members of parliament can also serve as useful bridges with other decision-making bodies, including parliamentary committees that work on IHL.

Based on this, the IPU would like to make the following considerations for enhanced cooperation between parliaments and national IHL committees:

1. *Including* parliamentary representatives in the membership of national IHL committees, or at least regularly *inviting* certain parliamentary representatives to attend committee meetings, especially working meetings on matters requiring action by parliament.

2. *Institutionalizing and clarifying* the interaction between parliament and national IHL committees by considering including in their mandate a reporting exercise on IHL issues to parliament, the possibility to recommend legislative measures regarding IHL, and the responsibility to follow up on the implementation of legislative provisions on IHL.
3. *Requesting* that the national IHL committee be heard on certain issues debated by parliament (for instance, during discussions relating to the ratification of or withdrawal from a treaty).

The interaction between parliaments and national IHL committees has the potential to contribute to tackling key challenges faced by these committees, including limited mandates and lack of financial resources, and thus need to be further explored and enhanced.