

**Statement by the delegation of Ukraine
during the second state consultation on
achieving meaningful protection for hospitals in armed conflict
(Workstream 5) under the Global Initiative to Galvanize Political
Commitment to International Humanitarian Law
(2 December 2025, Geneva)**

Thank you, Chair,

Distinguished delegates, ladies and gentlemen,

We would like to thank the ICRC and the co-chairs of this Workstream – Nigeria, Pakistan, Spain, Uruguay – for convening today's consultation.

We also appreciate insightful concept paper, which provides a very useful set of good practices aimed at improving respect for and implementation of IHL norms that protect hospitals and other medical facilities.

However, if we are to stem the tide of widespread attacks on healthcare, it is essential to prioritize justice not just as an obligation and moral imperative but also as a necessary deterrent. Thousands of survivors and victims of these attacks deserve to have perpetrators held accountable.

Session 1: Implementing the obligation to respect and protect medical facilities: Avoiding attacks

We would like to emphasize that hospitals and other medical facilities, medical personnel, units and transports are entitled to the highest level of protection under international humanitarian law. They must be always respected and protected and may never be attacked under any circumstances.

Any loss of such protection is an absolute exception that must fully meet the established legal conditions. Even if the specific protection afforded to medical facilities and medical personnel has been discontinued as an exceptional measure, the wounded and sick under their care must remain protected at all times.

Indeed, not only law but also elementary considerations of humanity require unconditional respect and protection for hospitals and other medical facilities, medical personnel, units and transports. This is the litmus test for the ability of a party to an armed conflict to comply with IHL. If a party fails to respect and protect hospitals and medical facilities, one can hardly expect that the party in question will honour and fulfil any other obligations. Failure to respect the absolute immunity of hospitals and medical facilities is a telltale sign of complete disdain for IHL.

We fully share the notion that without their meaningful protection, the entire framework that guarantees medical care collapse, increasing disproportionately the suffering of the civilian population and undermining the overarching IHL obligation to care for the wounded and sick.

It is a matter of grave concern that the recent decade has seen a dramatic escalation in attacks on medical care. Both military and civilian medical facilities are regularly and intentionally targeted, including those assisting the most vulnerable, like maternity and children`s hospitals.

Utterly immoral and truly alarming are growing numbers of ‘double-tap’ attacks on hospitals, other medical facilities, and on first responders, including medics, involved in recovery and rescue operations.

Massive and systematic violations of international humanitarian law and the impunity that goes with them lead to the further erosion of IHL and reduce the protective power of the Red Cross emblem.

For its part, Ukraine has prioritized the protection of medical facilities. The Instruction on Compliance with International Humanitarian Law in the Armed Forces of Ukraine, approved in 2017 by the Order of the Ministry of Defence № 164, contains a special section on medical facilities, which aims to ensure practical implementation of protective measures.

This section emphasizes and clarifies protections for hospitals and medical facilities set forth in the Geneva Conventions and Protocols Additional thereto. Furthermore, the Instruction outlines concrete measures aimed at guaranteeing such protections, including clear orders on how to ensure protection of medical facilities in the planning and conduct of military operations. On the lower level, military doctrines also address this matter.

For example, an Instruction on Civil-Military Cooperation in the Armed Forces of Ukraine obligates CIMIC officers to run a list of medical facilities in the area of responsibility of their military units and mark such facilities on a map. The list and the map are a part of the operation plan of the unit starting from the battalion level, and up to the Supreme Command. Without such lists and maps, an operation plan cannot be approved. Thus, military commanders are informed both about their duty to protect medical facilities, and about the location of such facilities.

The commanders are obliged by the IHL Instruction to take the location of medical facilities into account and to avoid both directing attacks against them and using such facilities for purposes other than medical. In the development of such plans, CIMIC officers are expected to cooperate with the local civilian authorities, and, if necessary, to contact directly the medical authorities.

These measures are not limited to planning and conduct of operations only. Ukraine has developed a soldier’s IHL card, that contains basic prescriptions. Every soldier receives such a card during their basic military training, which includes IHL component. The card includes a special section, entitled “Protection of Medical Missions”. It emphasizes that medical facilities, both military and civilian, must be respected and protected at all times.

Here, we would also like to take note of good practices to ensure that hospitals are not attacked, which were proposed for consideration under session 1. Ukraine has already been implementing a set of measures which go in line with these good practices. Its targeting procedures explicitly and consistently ensure

identification and mapping of medical facilities and cooperation with the civilian authorities in their protection. We call upon all states to implement similar protective measures for medical facilities to make sure that they are respected and protected.

We stand ready to share our practical experience and to learn from the experience of others. It is our collective responsibility to reverse the dangerous tide of massive and systematic attacks on medical care in armed conflicts and to strengthen IHL protective power.

Session 2: Implementing the obligation to respect and protect: Avoiding misuse of medical facilities for military purposes

During the previous session, my delegation outlined Ukraine's legal framework on the protection of hospitals and medical facilities in international armed conflict.

Now, we would like to describe in more detail how this framework addresses the obligation to respect and protect.

To begin with, the Instruction on Compliance with IHL in the Armed Forces of Ukraine includes a comprehensive list of objects protected by IHL, and the very first object listed is medical units.

Second, the Instruction contains a description of how commanders must take IHL into account in the planning and exercise of military operations. Among other things, the Instruction obligates commanders to include in the operation's plan orders on the use of medical facilities that may be captured during the operation. The instruction explicitly prohibits any change in the nature of such objects. It also obliges the armed forces to use the medical facilities placed under their control for medical purposes only, including for continuous treatment of the wounded and sick, who may be under care in such facilities.

There are even more concrete instructions for specific situations. For example, Instruction prohibits measures of radio-electronic warfare and any other interruptions of communications of medical facilities used by the adversary.

Measures aimed at the protection of hospitals and medical facilities are not limited to military orders. They are integrated in the activities of all Ukrainian authorities concerned.

This is exemplified by the Order of the Ministry of Health of Ukraine, adopted in 2024, which established the methodology for marking medical units and transports with relevant distinctive and protective symbols required by IHL. The document also set out the list of medical units and transports entitled to such marking and created an Information and Communication System for collecting and processing the data on such medical units, transports and personnel.

The Ministry of Health has the authority to permit the use of the Red Cross emblem for protective purposes. The procedure and conditions for the use of Red Cross symbol in the territory of Ukraine are regulated by the Law of Ukraine, which was adopted in 1999.

Finally, we would like to voice our support for good practices to ensure that hospitals are not attacked, which were proposed for consideration under session 2. Ukraine has already been implementing a set of measures, which go in line with these good practices and calls upon other states to do the same.

Session 3: Implementing the obligation to respect and protect: Facilitating the functioning of hospitals during armed conflicts

We would like to share our practical experience in implementing practical measures to ensure that medical facilities can remain functional and deliver healthcare services during international armed conflict.

To protect medical facilities, healthcare personnel and patients from attacks and physical harm, the Ministry of Health of Ukraine and medical facilities concerned have adopted a set of wide-ranging measures, which includes:

- emergency action plans during air alerts;
- contingency planning and training for healthcare personnel;
- strengthening physical protection of medical facilities;
- installation of window-blast protection, including shatter-resistant window film, protective roller blinds;
- renovation, and maintenance of underground shelters in hospitals and medical facilities for the use as refuge from the attacks and shelling and exceptionally for the provision of healthcare;
- emergency stockpiles of essential medicines and equipment;
- construction of underground hospitals, particularly close to the frontline.

The list of medical facilities has been established to manage increased influx of patients in the event of mass casualty.

The provision of safe quality health-care services has been continuously challenged by attacks on critical civilian infrastructure, resulting in disruptions of electricity, heating and water supply systems essential for life.

Thus, the ability to tackle power outages and an unstable electricity, heating and water supply to healthcare facilities is central to supporting their resilience in armed conflicts. In Ukraine, thousands of power generators, accumulator batteries and uninterrupted power supply units have been installed in hospitals and other medical facilities to maintain their stable functioning and provision of healthcare services during regular blackouts.

Autonomous functioning of hospitals and other medical facilities is ensured through autonomous sources of energy, such as solar panels, autonomous boiler-rooms, water supply systems, contingency stock of fuel, food, water.

Consistent efforts are underway to update electric, water and gas systems and networks in hospitals and medical facilities and to increase basic supplies.

We would like to emphasize the importance of international cooperation for maintaining resilience of healthcare during armed conflicts. Organizations of the United Nations system, particularly the World Health Organization, and the International Committee of the Red Cross play an important role in supporting

healthcare not only through provision of essential medicines, equipment, and health services, but also through assistance with repairs of damaged medical facilities and improving their access to water, sanitation and heating. We would like to use this opportunity to express our sincere gratitude to the ICRC and the UN family for their support for healthcare system in Ukraine and life-saving assistance to those most in need.

Thank you, Chair.