

ICRC Global Initiative to Galvanize Political Commitment to International Humanitarian Law

Workstream 3: IHL and Peace

Third State Consultations

Statement of Australia

5 February 2026

Australia's long-standing commitment to international humanitarian law (IHL) is central to our efforts to strengthen the disarmament architecture and uphold the rules-based system.

Humanitarian disarmament conventions are fundamental to the objectives of IHL. Through banning or limiting certain means and methods of warfare, treaties such as the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention, the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons and the Convention on Cluster Munitions protect civilians and reduce human suffering. This in turn lays the foundation for reconciliation and recovery.

But, alongside IHL, humanitarian disarmament treaties are under increasing pressure. The continued use of anti-personnel mines and cluster munitions, along with withdrawals from these conventions, threaten to weaken compliance with IHL and humanitarian disarmament norms.

Australia reaffirms our commitment to these Conventions' full application, particularly in conflict.

As we discussed in workstream one on 'prevention,' the integration of IHL into domestic law, and the establishment of regulatory procedures, can strengthen states' commitment to IHL. Similarly, Australia has reinforced our commitment to humanitarian disarmament norms through implementing domestic legislation and robust domestic processes.

For example, in respect of the Arms Trade Treaty, Australia has introduced legislative measures as well as domestic processes to fulfil our obligations. These processes not only support adherence to our treaty obligations, but also reinforce our commitment to regulating the trade of conventional arms to reduce the humanitarian consequences.

Australia also has a well-established process in place for legal reviews under article 36 of Additional Protocol I of the Geneva Conventions. Australia is a strong advocate of legal reviews, which are a critical mechanism for ensuring that the use of any new weapons, means or methods of warfare would be in compliance with IHL and relevant treaty obligations. In recent years, Australia has hosted three expert workshops on legal reviews of autonomous weapons systems, which sought to reinforce the utility of legal reviews and build elements of good practice.

At an international level, multilateral export control regimes also play a valuable role in strengthening states' commitment to disarmament and non-proliferation of conventional weapons

and weapons of mass destruction. By working together, states can fight the spread of these weapons by sharing expertise, information and best practices. As permanent Chair of the Australia Group, which celebrated its 40th anniversary last year, we are proud to be a global leader in international cooperation to prevent the proliferation of chemical and biological weapons.

And finally, declarations can also be an effective means to reinforce states' commitment to international humanitarian norms. At the second international conference on the EWIPA Declaration hosted by Costa Rica last November, Australia reaffirmed its full commitment to the Declaration and the goal of strengthening the protection of civilians from the humanitarian consequences arising from the use of explosive weapons in armed conflict.

Australia reaffirms that respect for IHL and disarmament norms and obligations is essential to reducing human suffering and supporting the conditions needed to promote peace. We will continue to uphold and champion IHL across all disarmament fora.