

Statement of Canada
Workstream 2: National IHL Committees
4th Round of Consultations

Canada is grateful for the extensive work undertaken thus far by the ICRC and the co-chairs. The outcome document reflects the discussions held across the workstream consultations. It provides a basis for translating the political momentum generated by this initiative into concrete and actionable recommendations to strengthen the potential and effectiveness of National IHL Committees.

Canada wishes to propose the following points for consideration.

On the format:

- The current workstream document format reflects a thoughtful approach by the co--chairs, who have struck a balance between practical recommendations and clear formatting - that States can readily use. This bullet point model with references to the relevant annex - is one we would recommend be adopted across all workstreams.
- The sub-categories in the outcome document translate the rich discussions from the consultations into concrete, actionable steps that national committees and states can realistically implement.

On Annex 1: The common purpose paper: guidance for states and national IHL committee

- Canada welcomes the thoughtful approach taken in the common purpose paper, particularly the way the document is drafted to be utilized by states in a wide range of contexts. We appreciate that it offers meaningful guidance both to states with longstanding national committees seeking to deepen their engagements and to those that have yet to establish such structures. We also value that the recommendations are sensitive to the differing realities of states experiencing armed conflict and those that are not.

On Annex 2: Terms of reference for enhancing regional and global national IHL committee platforms:

- We strongly support efforts to enhance cooperation among national IHL committees, particularly when it enables meaningful information-sharing and the exchange of best practices. At the same time, it is essential that any approach remains accessible and workable for a majority of states, especially in a period marked by financial constraints. We therefore encourage the use of existing mechanisms or venues such as the International Conference to avoid unnecessary duplication and to prevent additional financial or administrative burdens.
- We see value in continuing to refine the discussion around the proposed steering committee. We would encourage a discussion to elaborate on a mandate and how it would function in practice as well as additional clarity on its

scope, objectives, decision-making processes, and relationship to existing mechanisms.

- The current text does not reference the role - nor the membership of National Societies in the Steering Group. Considering their contributions to the functionality of many national committees and their mandate regarding IHL in their domestic situations, we recommend that National Societies be referenced in the proposals, both as regards to membership in a steering committee as well as at the Universal meetings of National IHL Committees.
- In Annex 2 para. 6 it would be important to recognise that those with a committee can also learn from those without one. The recommendations should therefore note that all platforms for National IHL Committees should remain inclusive of those states who do not have a committee but are nevertheless implementing IHL best practices.

Canada looks forwards to engage constructively with the second draft of the recommendations. Thank you.