

**The Global Initiative to Galvanize Political Commitment to International Humanitarian Law**

**WORKSTREAM 2: NATIONAL IHL COMMITTEES**

**FOURTH STATE CONSULTATION ON NATIONAL IHL COMMITTEES**

**7 May 2026**

**Statement by Finland**

I wish to thank the ICRC and all the co-chairs, Germany, Peru, Philippines, and the UK, for their efforts and for the draft outcome document and its three attachments.

We have carefully considered the **outcome 1 on “Empowered national IHL committees”** and the **“Common purpose paper: guidance for states and national IHL committees” in Annex 1** and see value in many of the recommendations. Finland has had a working group on international humanitarian law, i.e. the national IHL committee, since 1993, and we continuously seek to develop the group and improve its effectiveness. As we have highlighted before, it is important to understand the challenges of limited time and resources of States to not to overburden the committees or take away time from their substantive work. In this regard, we have some reservations regarding some of the suggestions in Annex 1 that seem to require a lot of resources. This could also hinder the establishment of new national IHL committees, if the requirements are seen very high. However, we acknowledge that many of the suggestions, e.g. regarding methods of operation, are of advisory nature and taking into consideration the different needs and capabilities. In addition, regarding the suggestion for the national IHL committee to be able to operate confidentially, if necessary, this depends e.g. on its composition and the national legislation regarding information on government activities.

Regarding the suggested 1(d) on “designating, as appropriate, an entity to whom the committee would periodically report and oversee the implementation of these recommendations”, we would wish to make sure not to create parallel structures or administrative requirements on top of existing ones. In our experience, it is essential for a committee’s effectiveness that it can adapt and operate flexibly within the mandate it has been given. We would also seek clarification on the 5(b) in the common purpose paper of Annex 1 regarding the reference of “having the authority to make commitments on their principal’s behalf”.

Throughout the consultations we have emphasized the importance of **international cooperation** and appreciate that **the recommendations under the title “2. stronger together” and Annex 2** (on terms of reference for enhancing regional and global national IHL committee platforms) seek to further advance this objective. We very much value the meetings between national IHL committees, whether regional or in broader groupings, and support the recommendations on more regular regional meetings for national IHL committees as well as a suggested universal meeting that would take place every four years. Such peer-to-peer learning is an important form of capacity building.

We are **very supportive of the suggested outcome 5 on National Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies**. The Finnish Red Cross has been a member of the Finnish national IHL committee since

the beginning, and we see much value in Nacional Societies supporting the work of the national IHL committee as well as utilizing their expertise. In Finland, it has also benefited the preparation and following up the implementation of the national and Nordic pledges for the International Conferences of the Red Cross and Red Crescent.

Thank you.