

The Global Initiative to Galvanize Political Commitment to International Humanitarian Law

WORKSTREAM 6: ICT

FOURTH STATE CONSULTATION ON UPHOLDING INTERNATIONAL HUMANITARIAN LAW IN THE USE OF INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGIES DURING ARMED CONFLICTS

5 May 2026

Statement by Finland

We wish to thank the ICRC and the co-chairs, Ghana, Luxembourg, Mexico and Switzerland, for preparing the draft outcome document, which, in our view, provides a good basis to better uphold IHL in the use of ICTs during armed conflicts.

Let me, once again, reiterate Finland's commitment to upholding IHL and its faithful interpretation and emphasize that IHL fully applies in cyber space. For the interest of time, we would wish to refer to our previous statements and only highlight some key elements, in light of the newly received draft outcome document.

Focusing on the recommendations regarding **“the protection of the civilian population and civilian data and infrastructure** from harm arising from ICT activities during armed conflict”, we stress the importance of protecting **civilians and civilian objects, including** essential civilian infrastructure, civilian services and **civilian data**. We appreciate how this is currently reflected in the draft recommendations.

Turning to the recommendations on **“safeguarding medical services, humanitarian activities and other specifically protected persons, objects and activities** from harm arising from ICT activities during armed conflict”: We have been vocal in emphasizing that the **special protections** under IHL, including those safeguarding medical services and humanitarian activities **shall be respected also in cyberspace and that includes their data**. We appreciate that this has been clearly reflected in the draft.

In addition, we are particularly pleased with the suggested **“cross-cutting measures to strengthen the implementation of IHL in relation to ICT activities”** and, especially, 7(k) on **“integrating gender- and age-sensitive, and disability-inclusive approaches** into national frameworks and operational practice in order to strengthen the implementation of IHL, including in identifying and addressing ICT-related risks”. Finland, together with the Finnish Red Cross, pledged at the 34th International Conference to increase awareness of gender dimensions in armed conflict and made also a pledge on IHL and persons with disabilities and disability inclusive humanitarian action. Stronger integration of a gender perspective into understanding of IHL as well as taking into account the specific barriers and risks faced by persons with disabilities when interpreting and implementing IHL is necessary to strengthen protection for *all*.

We are also very supportive of the recommendation under 7(g) on **“promoting transparency and shared understanding through the development and public sharing of national views on how international law, including IHL, applies to ICT activities”**. More than half of States – either through regional positions or national ones – have already put forward their views on how international law applies in cyberspace. These have paved the way towards a truly common

understanding on how international law, including IHL, applies in cyber space. National and regional positions are also important for capacity building, another important measure included under 7(h) in the draft outcome document.

Lastly, we would like to note that **the valuable work done under this workstream is also complemented by the other workstreams**, especially those on protecting civilian infrastructure (workstream 4), on achieving meaningful protection for hospitals (workstream 5) as well as on naval warfare (workstream 7), the last of which also includes a suggested outcome regarding new or emerging technologies. Finland has been actively contributing to the discussion under certain workstreams of the global IHL initiative, and we would wish to emphasize the **importance of ensuring coherence** between the different outcome documents.