

Global Initiative to Galvanize Political Commitment to International Humanitarian Law

**Regional Consultation for Latin America and Caribbean Countries on Upholding
International Humanitarian Law in the Use of Information and Communication
Technologies during Armed Conflicts**

Mexico City, 9-10 April 2026

**Jointly organized by the Government of Mexico and the International Committee of the Red
Cross**

Report*

1. Introduction

The Government of Mexico and the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) jointly convened a regional consultation for Latin America and Caribbean (GRULAC) countries on the workstream “Upholding international humanitarian law in the use of information and communication technologies during armed conflict” (ICT Workstream), within the framework of the [Global Initiative to Galvanize Political Commitment to International Humanitarian Law](#) (Global IHL Initiative), on 9-10 April 2026 in Mexico City.

The consultation brought together government representatives from 19 GRULAC countries as well as 3 co-chairing states from outside of the region (see Annex), alongside experts from academia, international and regional organizations, civil society and the private sector, to exchange views on the humanitarian and legal challenges arising from the use of information and communication technologies (ICTs) during armed conflict and to contribute regional perspectives to the ICT workstream. Notably, the consultation broadened participation in the ICT workstream across the GRULAC region. Among the 19 GRULAC states represented, Jamaica, Panama, Paraguay, Trinidad and Tobago and Venezuela - which had not previously participated in the global consultations - engaged in the workstream for the first time, bringing valuable additional regional perspectives to the process.

In line with the established practice under the Global IHL Initiative, discussions were conducted in a non-politicized and decontextualized manner, and participants were invited to refrain from referencing specific contexts or naming states or parties to armed conflict.

* This report has been prepared and published under the sole authority of the Government of Mexico and the International Committee of the Red Cross.

2. Context and Objectives

The consultation took place against a backdrop of evolving armed conflicts marked by increasing digitalization and growing reliance on ICT systems. As highlighted in the opening remarks, contemporary conflicts are becoming more complex, with expanding risks to civilians and civilian infrastructure, including through the disruption of essential services and digital systems on which societies depend.

The Global IHL Initiative was launched in September 2024 by Brazil, China, France, Jordan, Kazakhstan, South Africa and the ICRC, in response to the significant challenges facing international humanitarian law (IHL). Open to all High Contracting Parties to the Geneva Conventions, the Initiative seeks to develop a set of concrete and actionable outcomes to ensure that IHL is not only better respected, but also adapted to the realities of the future. This collective effort will culminate in a High-Level Conference on “Upholding Humanity in War” at the end of 2026 in Jordan.

The ICT Workstream, one of the seven thematic workstreams under the Global IHL Initiative, is co-chaired by Ghana, Luxembourg, Mexico and Switzerland together with the ICRC. It aims to foster a shared understanding among States and other stakeholders of how IHL imposes limits on the use of ICTs during armed conflicts, with a view to safeguarding civilian populations from harm in the digital age. The ICT workstream contributes to the overarching objective of the Global IHL Initiative by examining how existing IHL rules apply to ICT activities during armed conflict and by identifying practical measures to strengthen their implementation.

The regional consultation aimed to:

- provide a platform for GRULAC states to exchange views on legal and humanitarian issues related to ICTs in armed conflict;
- contribute regional perspectives to the finalization of the ICT workstream outcome;
- foster regional engagement and ownership; and
- reinforce dialogue and cooperation on IHL and digitalized warfare.

3. Overview of Discussions

3.1 High-Level Opening Session: Advancing the Global IHL Initiative – Upholding Humanity in War

The consultation opened with high-level remarks situating the discussions within the broader Global IHL Initiative. Representatives from a founding state as well as co-chairing states across all seven workstreams, recalled the importance of sustaining political momentum, including the final conference in Jordan, and reaffirming IHL as a central framework for protecting civilians in contemporary and future conflicts.

The session also reflected on the role of regional leadership and engagement in advancing the Initiative’s objectives and in elevating the importance of IHL in international discussions on the evolving nature of warfare.

3.2 Multi-Stakeholder Dialogue: Legal and Humanitarian Challenges in the Use of ICTs during Armed Conflict

The panel brought together expertise from academia, civil society and the private sector, highlighting the multistakeholder approach taken by the ICT workstream. Discussions focused on protecting civilian ICT infrastructure and data, strengthening accountability and norms, and advancing inclusive, human-centered approaches to cybersecurity. Discussions also highlighted the growing humanitarian consequences associated with ICT activities during armed conflict.

The discussions reaffirmed that existing IHL provides the applicable legal framework to protect civilians and other protected persons and objects from the dangers arising from the use of ICTs in armed conflict, and highlighted that the operationalization of IHL rules in the ICT environment raises complex challenges, including with respect to the assessment of effects and the interconnected nature of systems.

3.3 Overview of the ICT Workstream and Emerging Shared Understandings

Participants were presented with an overview of discussions under the ICT workstream to date, including emerging areas of shared understandings.

These included:

- recognition that IHL applies to ICT activities conducted in the context of and associated with armed conflict;
- the need to interpret and apply existing rules in a manner consistent with their protective purpose; and
- the importance of identifying practical measures to strengthen implementation.

The publication of the [first draft outcome document](#) on 1 April 2026 marked an important milestone in the process, providing a basis for further discussion and refinement.

3.4 Peer-to-Peer Exchange – National Approaches in the GRULAC Region

The ICT workstream encourages states to promote transparency and common understandings by developing and publicly sharing national views on how international law, including IHL, applies to ICT activities during armed conflict, and by exchanging lessons learned and good practices to minimize civilian harm. To date, four countries in the region, i.e. Brazil, Colombia, Costa Rica and Cuba, have published their national positions, and more countries are in the process of developing such national positions.

Participants exchanged national perspectives and experiences on the application of international law, including IHL, to ICT activities. There was broad recognition that IHL provides the core legal framework to safeguard civilians and other protected persons and objects from harm arising from the use of ICTs during armed conflict. At the same time, one participant cautioned against the automatic applicability of IHL, noting concerns that this could risk being perceived as legitimizing the use of force in cyberspace.

Discussions reflected a diversity of approaches, while also highlighting a shared interest in:

- developing or refining national positions;
- strengthening legal and institutional frameworks;
- enhancing coordination among relevant national actors; and
- addressing capacity constraints, including through regional cooperation and capacity building.

Participants emphasized that the development and sharing of national positions can contribute to transparency, trust-building and a shared understanding of how international law, including IHL, applies to cyberspace.

3.5 Protecting the Civilian Population, Data and Infrastructure from the Dangers Arising from ICT Activities during Armed Conflicts

Participants examined how existing IHL rules apply to ICT activities affecting the civilian population, civilian infrastructure and data.

Discussions highlighted key humanitarian risks, including:

- disruption of essential services;
- loss of functionality of systems;
- damaging, destroying or manipulating civilian data; and
- risks of harm arising from the military use of civilian ICT infrastructure and the civilian involvement in ICT activities, such as hackers and personnel of technology companies.

Participants noted the importance of:

- applying in good faith the IHL principles and rules to the conduct of ICT activities during armed conflict in order to protect the civilian population, infrastructure and data from harm, including the principles of humanity, military necessity, distinction, proportionality and precautions; the rules governing the conduct of hostilities; the obligation of constant care; and the protection of property from seizure and destruction;
- taking into account all foreseeable direct and indirect effects of ICT activities in the context of and associated with an armed conflict; and
- adopting measures, including by establishing and applying rigorous targeting procedures, to strengthen protection from harm arising from ICT activities.

3.6 Safeguarding Specific Protections in the ICT Environment and Averting Information Spread in Violation of IHL

Certain persons, objects and activities benefit from specific protections under IHL, including medical services, humanitarian activities and other specially protected objects, such as objects indispensable for the survival of the civilian population, works and installations containing dangerous forces, cultural property and civil defence. As these increasingly rely on digital systems and data, ICT activities may create new risks for their functioning and protection.

Discussions addressed the application of specific protections under IHL in the ICT environment, including for medical services, humanitarian activities and objects indispensable to the survival of the civilian population.

Participants emphasized that these protections remain fully applicable and must be effectively implemented, including when conducting ICT activities during armed conflicts. This protection includes their data and the ICT infrastructure indispensable to their functioning.

The session also examined risks posed by ICT-enabled activities that may facilitate violations of IHL, including the spread of harmful information, as well as sexual violence and the recruitment or use of children in hostilities committed through or facilitated by ICTs. Participants highlighted the importance for states and other stakeholders to safeguard these protections in an increasingly digitalized battlespace.

3.7 Cross-Cutting Measures to Strengthen Implementation of IHL in Relation to ICT Activities

Participants discussed cross-cutting measures to strengthen the implementation of IHL in relation to ICT activities, including through measures undertaken in peacetime.

These included:

- integrating IHL into military doctrine, training and decision-making processes;
- disseminating IHL within armed forces and among the wider population, in particular among those who may be involved in ICT activities;
- ensuring the availability of qualified legal advisers to military units and commands responsible for ICT activities, including in the planning and conduct of such operations;
- conducting legal reviews of cyber capabilities;
- taking all feasible measures to prevent or limit the proliferation, repurposing or misuse of ICT tools and capabilities where there is a clear risk that they would contribute to violations of IHL;
- strengthening national frameworks to prevent and suppress IHL violations; and
- enhancing international cooperation and capacity-building.

Participants also emphasized the importance of promoting transparency and trust-building, including through voluntary information-sharing and confidence-building measures aimed at reducing risks to civilian ICT infrastructure.

In this regard, participants also highlighted the importance of developing and publicly sharing national views on how international law, including IHL, applies to ICT activities, as a means to promote transparency, foster shared understandings and support peer exchange.

Participants further emphasized the importance of engaging a broad range of actors, including government entities, the private sector, civil society and humanitarian organizations.

Finally, participants highlighted the need to integrate gender- and age-sensitive, and disability-inclusive approaches into national frameworks and operational practice, including in identifying and addressing ICT-related risks.

4. Towards the Workstream Outcome and Ways Forward

- Participants highlighted the growing human costs of ICT activities in times of armed conflict, and the importance of preserving human dignity and addressing the risks posed to civilian populations, including through the disruption of essential services.
- Participants reaffirmed the continued relevance of IHL in the use of ICTs during armed conflict, emphasizing that the objective of the workstream is to strengthen the implementation of existing IHL, and not to develop new legal rules. They stressed the importance of its implementation in good faith in light of technological developments and in view of protecting civilians and other protected persons and objects from harm in the digital era.
- Participants underlined the value of the ICT workstream as a space for in-depth, constructive and inclusive dialogue, allowing for the exchange of views, national positions and good practices across regions.
- Participants noted that the draft outcome provides a strong and solid basis for further discussion and refinement in the next phase of the workstream. They emphasized the importance of developing a protective and practical outcome that upholds the protections afforded by IHL in the use of ICTs and supports States in implementing IHL, including through measures to protect civilian populations and civilian data and infrastructure.
- Participants encouraged the development and voluntary publication of national positions on the application of international law, including IHL, to ICT activities, as a concrete means to enhance transparency and trust building, foster a shared understanding and support peer exchange across the region.
- Participants also underscored the value of regional cooperation and continued engagement on issues related to ICTs and IHL, and highlighted the need for capacity-building to strengthen States' ability to implement and apply IHL in relation to ICT activities. They emphasized that prevention remains central to these efforts, and that violations of IHL do not diminish its continued relevance, but rather reinforce the need to strengthen respect for and implementation of existing rules. In this respect, they emphasized the importance of drawing on the expertise of regional and international organizations to support the development of national approaches and implementation frameworks.
- Participants highlighted the importance of continued engagement by GRULAC states in the next phase of the ICT workstream, including through contributions from a regional perspective to upcoming consultations, with a view to supporting the development and future implementation of a strong, practical and inclusive outcome.
- Participants highlighted the importance of further operationalizing IHL in the ICT environment, including in relation to issues such as attribution, responsibility, "dual-use" infrastructure and the role of technology companies.
- Participants also underscored the importance of sustained engagement in the lead-up to the final conference on "Upholding Humanity in War" in Jordan, including to ensure that the digitalization of warfare does not outpace the collective capacity to protect civilians.

5. Next Steps

The regional consultation forms part of the ICT workstream under the Global IHL Initiative.

States and other stakeholders will continue to work together through upcoming rounds of consultations in May and June 2026, with a view to finalizing an outcome document that contributes to a shared understanding of how IHL applies to ICT activities during armed conflict and provides a practical reference for its implementation.

The Government of Mexico and the ICRC expressed their appreciation to all participants for their active and constructive engagement and encouraged continued participation in the next phase of the process.

Annex - List of participating states

Argentina
Australia
Bolivia
Brazil
Chile
Colombia
Costa Rica
Cuba
Dominican Republic
Egypt
El Salvador
Guatemala
Honduras
Jamaica
Mexico
Panama
Paraguay
Peru
Switzerland
Trinidad and Tobago
Uruguay
Venezuela