



Fourth Round of Consultations
Workstream 2: National IHL Committees
New Zealand Written Feedback on Draft Outcome Document

New Zealand thanks the ICRC, as well as the co-chairs Germany, Peru, the Philippines, and the United Kingdom, for your stewardship of Workstream 2, and the opportunity to provide written comment on the draft outcome document.

New Zealand was an early adopter of the National IHL Committee mechanism, having established the first *New Zealand National Committee for the Implementation of International Humanitarian Law*, over fifty years ago. Today, this body continues to bring together representatives from across government, academia and the New Zealand Red Cross, with the purpose of disseminating, promoting and implementing IHL at the national level, and providing advice, on request, on global or domestic IHL issues.

On the basis of our experience with this mechanism, New Zealand finds a number of elements in the draft outcome document particularly useful.

Firstly, we strongly support the emphasis on being **stronger together** (section 2) including recommendations to strengthen peer-to-peer dialogue. As we noted in our first statement on this workstream, New Zealand's IHL Committee supports outreach to Pacific partners. We recognise this kind of peer-to-peer engagement is valuable for sharing practical lessons and building shared capacity.

We also support the proposal to establish a **National IHL Committee Steering Group** (Annex 2, section 1) to advance regional and global cooperation. We note that ensuring geographical diversity, including representation from the Pacific (as national capacities allow) will be important to the success of any steering group mechanism.

Secondly, we welcome the focus on **empowered national IHL committees** (section 1), including the recommendation to designate a relevant authority to whom committees periodically report. New Zealand's National IHL Committee operates as a ministerial advisory body, and we have found that this supports coherence, visibility and sustained engagement across government.

Finally, we support the recognition of **effective expert advice** (section 3) as a core function of national IHL committees. New Zealand's National IHL Committee is mandated to advise the Minister on how the Government may best meet its responsibilities for the dissemination, promotion and implementation of IHL. This includes reviewing public dissemination efforts and advising on potential amendments to domestic legislation and policy.

In addition to its advisory and coordination functions, New Zealand's National IHL Committee also plays a valuable role in supporting broader awareness and understanding of IHL beyond government, including through engagement with universities and schools, professional groups and civil society.

We therefore consider that the document could be further strengthened to account for the broader role national committees can play in supporting public dissemination of IHL during peacetime. To this end, we would suggest the following minor addition to paragraph 3(f) of Annex 2 under 'Competence and Responsibilities'.

Draft text:

h) National IHL committees should support their state to disseminate IHL among the armed forces and the public, and to make recommendations in this regard.

Suggested change:

h) National IHL committees should encourage and support the dissemination of IHL, among the armed forces and the public at large, including by making recommendations as to how the state can best meet its responsibilities for the dissemination and promotion of IHL.

New Zealand Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade

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