

**Office of the Special Representative for Children and Armed Conflict -
Statement**

**Global IHL Initiative - Workstream 5 on protection of hospitals
Statement**

Thank you Chair.

Excellencies,

Ladies and gentlemen,

The Office of the UN Special Representative for Children and Armed Conflict welcomes the outcome document of Workstream 5. Attacks on hospitals constitute serious violations of international humanitarian law with medical facilities granted one of the highest levels of protection because they are indispensable to saving lives. When hospitals are attacked, the consequences are devastating and far-reaching. The destruction of health infrastructure reverberates for years, undermining public health systems, community resilience, and post-conflict recovery.

When war is fought in urban environments, indirect consequences may further and dramatically increase harm. Damage to interconnected infrastructure, such as electricity, water, transport, and supply chains, can severely degrade the functioning of hospitals and magnify civilian suffering well beyond the immediate vicinity of hostilities.

Attacks on hospitals are particularly catastrophic for children. Under the Children and Armed Conflict agenda, attacks on hospitals constitute a grave violation against children, depriving them of access to essential and life-saving medical care at moments of acute vulnerability.

Under the United Nations Monitoring and Reporting Mechanism established by Security Council resolution 1612, attacks on hospitals are systematically documented and verified, providing the basis for advocacy and engagement with parties to conflict to end and prevent further violations. In line with UN Security Council resolution 1998 attacks on hospitals serve as triggers for listing in the Secretary-Generals annual report on Children and Armed Conflict and for engagement with the United Nations, including through the development and implementation of action plans. For children, the impact of these violations is both immediate and lifelong. Preventable deaths increase, treatment for injuries and illnesses is delayed or denied, and trauma, both physical and psychological, becomes a lasting part of their lives.

Ending and preventing attacks on hospitals requires sustained engagement with parties to conflict. This includes the provision of training, the promotion of strict adherence to rules of engagement, and the establishment and respect of no-strike lists to protect medical facilities. In this regard, we welcome the Global Initiative, particularly its outcome documents, which provide useful and practical examples to strengthen compliance with international humanitarian law.

Yet, a persistent lack of accountability for attacks against hospitals continues to fuel impunity. Independent investigations are essential to deter future violations and to uphold respect for international law. We encourage States to make use of existing independent mechanisms, including the International Humanitarian Fact-Finding Commission.

We call on States to ensure that perpetrators, including those with command responsibility, are held accountable. In this context, it is imperative to train the judiciary and prosecutors in the investigation of conduct of hostilities violations.

To conclude, we would like to express our hope that the protection of children affected by armed conflict will also be explicitly reflected in the political outcome document of the Global Initiative, to send a clear political signal at the highest level.