

**Remarks by the delegation of Ukraine
during the fourth state consultation on protecting civilian
infrastructure (Workstream 4) under the Global Initiative to
Galvanize Political Commitment to International Humanitarian Law
(4 May 2026, Geneva)**

Thank you, Chair, for giving me the floor.

Ukraine would like to thank the co-chairs of this Workstream and the International Committee of the Red Cross for preparing the draft outcome.

Ensuring effective protection of civilians and civilian objects, including infrastructure, remains one of the priorities for Ukraine and we attach great importance to the adoption of the meaningful and actionable recommendations under this Workstream. We also underline that the protection of civilian infrastructure must be understood in conjunction with the protection of objects enjoying special protection under international humanitarian law, including cultural property, where damage may affect not only physical assets but also the identity, dignity and social cohesion of affected communities.

The document before us makes a genuine effort to reflect the broad views expressed by states throughout three rounds of extensive consultations.

We welcome the concept, clarity and structure of the draft outcome, which sets out practical measures for strengthening the protection of infrastructure and the civilians dependent on it.

We appreciate the recognition of the crucial role of upholding the limits imposed by the concept of “military objectives” for protecting all civilians and civilian objects, including civilian infrastructure.

We also support the measures proposed for operationalization of the definition of “military objectives”, including through reinforcing the system of legal advisers and integrating this concept into military doctrine and training.

We also welcome the document’s focus on heightened protection afforded to specific types of objects and infrastructure under special protection regimes. My delegation has specific language proposals regarding ensuring protection of cultural objects, which **we will send to the Secretariat of the Global Initiative by 7 May**. In this respect, Ukraine proposes to further clarify the text so that cultural property is treated not only as a general example of protected objects, but as a category requiring practical operational measures before, during and after hostilities.

First, Ukraine emphasizes that mapping protected infrastructure should rely on up-to-date heritage data (inventories, registers, geospatial sources) to support “no-strike” lists and prevent targeting of cultural sites.

Second, in assessing the anticipated effects of attacks impacting civilian infrastructure, we would welcome the inclusion of specific references to direct and indirect risks posed to cultural property. Even if not directly hit by the strike, cultural sites and collections may suffer serious damage from blast waves, fire, flooding, loss of climate control, or weakened security, which may in turn increase the risks of looting, vandalism and illicit removal. For this reason, where military operations may affect cultural property, the decision-making process should, where feasible, include experts on cultural property and heritage protection, in addition to legal advisers, engineers, urban planners and other specialists already mentioned in the draft.

Third, we would like the draft to reflect the need to avoid, to the maximum extent possible, the use of cultural property and its immediate surroundings for military purposes. Such use may expose sites of cultural significance to destruction, damage or loss and undermine the very purpose of the special protection afforded to cultural property under IHL.

Fourth, post-strike assessments and lessons-learned processes should, where relevant, include damage to cultural property and the consequences of such damage for affected communities. The findings of such assessments should be communicated to competent authorities responsible for heritage protection and emergency safeguarding, so that they can support timely conservation measures, documentation of damage and future recovery.

These proposals are intended to strengthen the overall structure of the draft outcome. In our view, they would make the recommendations more operational by linking the existing references to special protection, verification, precaution, damage assessment and recovery with concrete measures for safeguarding cultural heritage in contemporary armed conflicts.

Disruption of essential services, particularly during the cold months, has devastating, long-lasting and even irreversible consequences for the civilian population. We strongly support the emphasis placed in the document on safeguarding essential service providers and their personnel and critical consumables. Civilians can only have continual access to essential services if the personnel can safely access their places of work to ensure the systems' uninterrupted functioning and to repair damaged infrastructure.

Additionally, we stress the importance of taking feasible precautions to protect civilians and civilian objects in attack and against the effects of attacks. In this regard, we take note of the discussions held last April at the State Expert Meeting on IHL devoted to the implementation of the principle of precaution in armed conflicts. In our view, the draft outcome incorporates several key suggestions made during the State Expert Meeting.

Finally, we would like to thank once again the ICRC and co-chairs for their efforts and look forward to engaging constructively to finalize this important draft outcome.

Thank you.