Statement of H.E. Archbishop Ettore Balestrero
Permanent Observer of the Holy See to the United Nations and other
International Organizations in Geneva, at the
**Global IHL Dialogue organized by Switzerland**
**and the International Committee of the Red Cross**
**High level plenary discussion: IHL and Peace**
*Geneva, 3 November 2026*

Excellencies,

The Holy See welcomes the convening of the current session under the title of "IHL and Peace", thereby highlighting that respect for International Humanitarian Law (IHL) contributes to preserving the social and economic fabric upon which reconstruction and reconciliation depend in the aftermath of war.

Indeed, the active implementation of IHL in good faith contributes to an environment that respects the God-given dignity of every human being, in its social, economic, political, cultural, personal, and spiritual dimensions.

Humanitarian gestures of good will – such as prisoner exchanges or the dignified return of the deceased – can help restore trust and advance dialogue towards meaningful peace negotiations. The Holy See wishes to recall that the protection of civilians from the effects of hostilities is not merely a means of giving concrete expression to the principle of distinction. It also represents the indispensable condition for safeguarding those minimum standards of humanity which bind all parties without exception, and which no circumstance may justify setting aside.

Amidst today's complex environment, marked by a trend of rearmament and a rise in armed conflicts, it seems most appropriate to recall the words addressed by Saint Paul VI to the UN General Assembly in 1965, "It is peace, peace, that has to guide the destiny of the nations of all mankind!"[1]

A true and lasting peace, however, can only be achieved through the renewal of the heart and mind.[2] Education for peace is a crucial means to that end. Fostering a culture of peace is a task entrusted to all.[3] In this context, "a disarming and disarmed education" that fosters equality, mutual respect and growth for all, while affirming the equal dignity of every person, is needed to

[1] Pope Paul VI, *Address to the United Nations General Assembly*, 1965.
[2] Pope Leo XIV, *Message for the 59th World Day of Peace*, 1 January 2026.
[3] Pope Leo XIV, *Address to the Movements and Associations of the "Arena of Peace"*, 30 May 2025.

further promote the cultivation of a culture of justice and peace.[4] Such peace is not merely the stillness of the battlefield, but rather the fruit of deliberately and actively pursuing the common good.

Thank you.

[4] Cf. Declaration of the Holy See attached to the instrument of ratification of the two Protocols additional to the Geneva Conventions of 1949, 21 November 1985.