Global IHL Dialogue
Statement of Italy
Geneva, 3rd November 2026
Roundtable 1: A whole-of-society approach to build the foundations of IHL
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Thank you Chair and thanks to all the panelists for their insightful contributions.

I would like to focus on how a whole-of-society approach can help sustain respect for IHL in an increasingly polarized information environment.

The consultations have highlighted that compliance with IHL is influenced **not only by legal and institutional frameworks, but also by military training and leadership, responsible public communication and broader public understanding of IHL**. This is particularly relevant where dehumanizing narratives or hostile public discourse risk normalizing conduct that is inconsistent with IHL.

A whole-of-society approach therefore requires more than the dissemination of legal rules. It also requires **sustained engagement across institutions and society** to shape how those rules are understood and applied in practice.

Military professional culture is central in this regard. In Italy, this is reflected in structured pre-deployment preparation, including IHL-based training, scenario-based exercises and the involvement of legal advisers in operational planning and decision-making. These measures can contribute to preserving discipline, judgement and respect for human dignity under operational pressure.
The same effort also requires **coordination beyond the armed forces**. In Italy, our National IHL Commission brings together, among others, the Ministries of Foreign Affairs, Defence and Justice and the Italian Red Cross, while also providing a large space for engagement with civil society. Cooperation on IHL indeed involves academia and specialised institutions such as the Sanremo Institute.

The practical challenge is therefore to build these connections before a crisis occurs, so that respect for IHL is already firmly reflected in institutional practice, military training and broader public understanding.

Thank you.