



PERMANENT MISSION OF FINLAND
TO THE UNITED NATIONS
NEW YORK

YKE5069-50

The Permanent Representative of Finland to the United Nations, referring to the note LA/COD/2 dated 22 January 2007, requesting information on the status of the Protocols Additional to the Geneva Conventions of 1949 as well as on measures taken to strengthen the existing body of international humanitarian law (IHL), has the honour to inform His Excellency the Secretary-General of the following.

In November 2004, Finland ratified the Second Protocol to the Hague Convention of 1954 for the Protection of Cultural Property in the Event of Armed Conflict. In December 2004 and March 2005, respectively, Finland's instrument of approval of the Agreement on Privileges and Immunities of the International Criminal Court (ICC) and instrument of approval of the Protocol on Explosive Remnants of War annexed to the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons was deposited with the Secretary-General of the United Nations.

Finland actively supported the adoption of the III Protocol Additional to the Geneva Conventions in December 2005. Finland signed the Protocol on 13 March 2006 and the preparations for its ratification are currently underway.

In accordance with Finland's pledge made at the 28th International Conference of the Red Cross and Red Crescent in 2003, Finland reviewed the provisions on material criminal law in the Penal Code to reach full compatibility with the definitions of crimes in the Rome Statute. The new provisions entered into force on 1 May 2008. In 2005, Finland concluded an agreement with the ICC for the relocation of witnesses. Negotiations on an agreement on the enforcement of sentences with the Court are underway. Similarly, negotiations have been initiated with the Special Court of Sierra Leone on an agreement on the enforcement of sentences. Furthermore, Finland has financially supported the ICC Victims Trust Fund, as well as the Court's Visiting Professionals Programme and the implementation of the Legal Tools Project. Furthermore, Finland has also sought to build support for the Court by financing projects of the Coalition for the International Criminal Court (CICC) and the inter-sessional meetings on the Crime of Aggression organised at the Woodrow Wilson School of the University of Princeton.

At the 30th International Conference of the Red Cross and Red Crescent in 2007, Finland made altogether ten specific pledges. Together with the other EU member states, Finland pledged to promote public dissemination and training of international humanitarian law, to strengthen national implementation and enforcement of IHL and to ensure respect of fundamental procedural guarantees for all persons detained in relation with an armed conflict. Furthermore, the EU member states pledged to promote the internationalisation of arms export standards, to address as a matter of urgency in the context of the CCW the humanitarian impact of cluster munitions that cause unacceptable harm to civilians and to support the aim pursued by the IFRC in its draft guidelines for the domestic facilitation and regulation of international disaster relief and initial recovery assistance. Finally, the EU made a pledge to encourage its Member States to work in close cooperation with their respective National Societies.

On a national basis, Finland pledged to support the integration of migrants into Finnish society. Together with the other four Nordic countries Finland pledged to strengthen understanding of the Red Cross' neutral and independent approach to humanitarian action among key actors, such as decision makers, military personnel and humanitarian organisations. Finland, Sweden and Switzerland also renewed their pledge to promote a shared understanding of how IHL should be applied to computer network attacks during armed conflict, building on discussions and deliberations already initiated.

The Finnish National Committee on IHL was actively involved in the preparations for the 30th International Conference and will monitor the implementation of the pledges made in the Conference.

Specific activities regarding dissemination of IHL

In November 2005, an article on the ICRC Study on Customary Humanitarian Law, together with 161 rules, was published in the publication series of the Ministry for Foreign Affairs in Finnish and a seminar was organised at the University of Helsinki in order to make the Study known to students of international law.

Effective implementation of the 2005 European Union Guidelines on promoting compliance with international humanitarian law was one of the priorities of Finland's EU presidency in the latter half of 2006. The Guidelines are designed to mainstream international humanitarian law into the Common Foreign and Security Policy of the European Union.

In September 2006, the Ministry for Foreign Affairs and Amnesty International arranged a joint seminar focusing on the situation in Western Balkans and dealing with impunity, under the title "Building a Culture of Accountability: Action against Impunity in the External Relations of the European Union".

In order to ensure effective dissemination of the Geneva Conventions and their Additional Protocols, the Ministry for Foreign Affairs funds the training courses organised by the Finnish Red Cross. Also other institutions, such as the Institute for Human Rights of the Åbo Akademi University and the Erik Castrén Institute of International Law and Human Rights of the University of Helsinki have organised courses and seminars and issued publications related to international humanitarian law within their fields of activity. Furthermore, the law faculties at the University of Helsinki, University of Lapland, University of Turku and the Institute for Human Rights of the Åbo Akademi University regularly provide courses, which address various issues relating to international humanitarian law.

Finland has regularly submitted information on the national implementation of international humanitarian law to the ICRC website at www.icrc.org. Further details can be found there.

The Permanent Representative of Finland to the United Nations avails herself of this opportunity to renew to His Excellency the Secretary-General of the United Nations the assurance of her highest consideration.

New York, 13 May 2008



His Excellency
Secretary-General
of the United Nations
New York