



Statement by the Bangladesh Delegation under Agenda Item 81: Status of the Protocols Additional to the Geneva Conventions on 1949 and relating to the protection of victims of armed conflicts at the Sixth Committee of the 71st Session of the UN General Assembly

10 October 2016, Trusteeship Council Chamber

Mr. Chair/ Distinguished delegates,

Bangladesh thanks the Secretary General for his report contained in document A/71/183 on the status of the Protocols Additional to the Geneva Conventions of 1949 and relating to the protection of victims of armed conflicts.

As a State Party to the four Geneva Conventions of 1949 and the two Additional Protocols of 1977, Bangladesh continues to remain concerned over recurrent reports of serious violation of international humanitarian law by both States and non-state actors in different conflict situations, including in the Occupied Palestinian Territories, Syrian Arab Republic and other parts of the world. We join others in condemning such violations and the resulting humanitarian crises, and stress the need for holding the perpetrators accountable for alleged violations in order to prevent their recurrence. The gross and wanton violations of IHL that we witness around the world make us only too aware of the challenges of ensuring compliance with the existing legal norms and framework by different actors.

As we understand it, there are a number of in-built mechanisms and procedures within the existing IHL regime that need to be duly invoked and put into effect in order to further promote compliance with IHL provisions by different actors. In lieu of working on further innovations, there is a need for our collective exercise on exploring ways of allowing the existing mechanisms and procedures to serve our purpose better in a relevant and demonstrable manner. It is also perhaps a question of recalibrating mindset towards IHL compliance within the broader context of promoting a 'culture of peace'.

In this context, in the backdrop of the further illegal settlement expansion plan by the occupying power, we urge the State Parties to the Geneva Conventions to add their voice to the demands for unqualified compliance with IHL provisions in the Occupied Palestinian Territories, and further strengthening protection and assistance for the Palestinian people. We reiterate our call upon the Government of Switzerland, as the depository of the Geneva Conventions, to convene a Conference of the High Contracting Parties of the Fourth Geneva Convention to adopt legal measures to ensure respect for and compliance with the Convention in case of continued hostilities in the Occupied Palestinian Territories.

Bangladesh believes that the outcome of the World Humanitarian Summit held this year should help further promote IHL across the board. We acknowledge the critical importance of the Security Council's preoccupation with ensuring unhindered humanitarian access and assistance during armed conflicts. We urge all concerned parties to various ongoing conflicts to remain sensitized to the need for maintaining the sanctity of healthcare and education facilities and other civilian infrastructure critical for rendering humanitarian assistance to the affected people, including women, children and the elderly.

We stress that respect for international humanitarian law and human rights law is crucial for sustaining peace, including for achieving lasting solutions to the ongoing armed conflicts in the Middle East and elsewhere. We add our voice to the call for preventing sexual violence during armed conflicts, and strengthening the voice, participation and role of women and girls as well as men and boys for ensuring that such heinous practices are not resorted to as a tactic of war.

We see potential contributions of the Arms Trade Treaty (ATT), among other international legal instruments, in effectively contributing to preventing violation of IHL provisions. The possibility of Bangladesh's accession to ATT remains under our Government's active consideration.

In our national context, we have recently established a National IHL Committee with active support from the International Committee of Red Cross (ICRC). The National Committee is current looking into the possibility of concluding a further comprehensive national implementing legislation for the Geneva Conventions and their Additional Protocols. It also recognizes the need for further dissemination of IHL among people in general, including through its suitable incorporation into national education curricula. The work of translating the Geneva Conventions and the Additional Protocols into our vernacular language is being pursued

to make IHL provisions further accessible to our people. Bangladesh wishes to thank ICRC Regional Office for its sustained investment in training representatives from both public and private sectors on IHL provisions. The ICRC Country Office is being consulted for developing a number of draft national legislations and also the National Action Plan for implementing UN Security Council Resolution 1325 and its successor Resolutions.

In the area of ensuring accountability for mass atrocities and attendant violation of IHL, Bangladesh has achieved some experience and insights into the challenges involved in instituting national judicial processes in compliance with relevant international standards. As we flagged earlier, Bangladesh stands ready to contribute its perspective to the evolving discourse and initiatives in this regard by the UN and other international actors. It is quite revealing how some vested domestic and international quarters can work in unison towards relegating certain cases of IHL violation to collective amnesia, and also create stumbling blocks in the national accountability and judicial processes towards exerting considerable pressure on the various relevant UN and other international mechanisms and actors. These are sensitive issues to broach, but deserve to be discussed in the appropriate fora in right earnest.

I thank you all.