



75th session of the Sixth Committee

Status of the Protocols Additional to the Geneva Conventions of 1949 and relating to the protection of victims of armed conflicts (*Agenda item 83*)

Statement by Portugal – Mr. Sergio Carvalho (Legal Adviser)

Mr. Chairman,

Portugal aligns itself with the statement delivered by the European Union on the Status of the Protocols Additional to the Geneva Conventions of 1949 and relating to the protection of victims of armed conflicts and would like to convey the following remarks in its national capacity.

We thank the Secretary General for his report, as well as the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) and the Member States who submitted contributions on measures taken to strengthen the existing body of international humanitarian law (IHL).

Mr. Chairman,

In the report I have just mentioned, the ICRC submitted information on several accessions and ratifications to the Additional Protocols and other pertinent international legally binding instruments of IHL, on the period from June 2018 to June 2020.

These facts are to be welcomed: in addition to abiding to the customary IHL that is already binding on them, States are giving their consent to become bound to treaties on various subjects with relevance to armed conflict – such as the



protection of victims of armed conflict, the protection of cultural heritage, International Criminal Justice, disarmament, non-proliferation and arms control.

Nevertheless, the main concern regarding IHL remains: its implementation. The most pressing implementation problems relate to both old and new challenges – from State capacity to adequately train and supervise its armed forces on IHL matters to new means and methods of warfare and new actors in armed conflict.

With this in mind, in December 2019 the Thirty-third International Conference of the Red Cross and Red Crescent adopted the resolution “Bringing IHL home: a road map for better national implementation of international humanitarian law”. Portugal is committed to answer this call and encourages all States to strive to do the same.

Mr. Chairman,

Portugal has ratified the Additional Protocols of 1977 and of 2005 to the Geneva Conventions of 1949.

Furthermore, my country has long been a supporter of the International Humanitarian Fact-Finding Commission established under Article 90 of Additional Protocol I to the Geneva Conventions, and has accepted the competence of this Commission on 1 July, 1994.

To implement its obligations under IHL – and International Human Rights Law where applicable to armed conflict –, Portugal has implemented several measures relating to the protection of victims of armed conflicts and the dissemination and strengthening of IHL at the national level.



Portuguese authorities maintain a close and fruitful collaboration with the Portuguese Red Cross, having established a permanent consultation mechanism that has met to review matters such as the follow-up of the resolutions and pledges of the International Conferences of the Red Cross and Red Crescent.

Another example of that good relationship are the specific pledges submitted by Portugal and the Portuguese Red Cross at the Thirty-third International Conference of the Red Cross and Red Crescent, in December 2019. One of those pledges relates to "*Establishing a national committee on International Humanitarian Law in Portugal*".

Mr. Chairman,

In closing, my delegation would like to pay tribute to all humanitarians, professional or voluntaries, whose work embodies the Fundamental Principles of Humanity, Impartiality, Neutrality, Independence, Voluntary Service, Unity and Universality.

Every day, stories of compliance with International Humanitarian Law save and defend human dignity and human lives. Portugal calls on all parties to armed conflict to multiply these success stories and to respect and ensure respect for IHL.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.