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**UNITED NATIONS GENERAL ASSEMBLY 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 81)**

17 October 2022

Statement on behalf of Australia, Canada and New Zealand

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Thank you Chair,

I am pleased to deliver this statement today on behalf of Canada, New Zealand and my own country, Australia (CANZ).

At the outset, we would like to take this opportunity to reaffirm our strong commitment to the implementation of, and compliance with, international humanitarian law (IHL).

Armed conflict continues to have a devastating impact across many regions and populations. The Additional Protocols to the Geneva Conventions of 1949 remain an essential component of the IHL framework that protects civilians and other persons in both international and non-international armed conflict.

It is our view that States should strive to replicate the universal membership of the Geneva Conventions to ensure that the protections of IHL are applied by parties to armed conflicts at all times. Accordingly, we strongly encourage States that have not yet become parties to the three Additional Protocols to do so as soon as possible and to give full effect to their provisions.

[Madame/Mr] Chair,

Many of the key rules contained in the Protocols reflect rules of customary international law and are binding on all parties to armed conflict. Recent events have reminded us of the importance of these rules of international law.

We are acutely aware that the proper and effective protection of people affected by armed conflict rests heavily upon compliance with IHL.

Critically, this relies on actors that violate IHL being held to account. In this regard, CANZ firmly believes that accountability for violations of IHL is critical to achieving lasting peace and security.

We encourage the International Conferences of the Red Cross and Red Crescent to continue to engage with States on mechanisms to enhance compliance with IHL.

We acknowledge and welcome that at the most recent 33rd International Conference, States adopted a resolution urging all parties to armed conflicts to fully comply with their obligations under IHL, and calling upon States to adopt necessary legislative, administrative and practical measures at the domestic level. We look forward to building on this initiative.

We stress that increased implementation of IHL, including the Additional Protocols, will be achieved through States taking practical measures to enhance respect for IHL. For example:

- incorporating IHL into their military doctrine, field training and rules of engagement
- sharing lessons learned and good practices, as well as
- ensuring that national judicial structures are capable of effectively addressing IHL violations.

Finally, we would like to acknowledge the crucial role of the ICRC in promoting and disseminating IHL, and working to improve compliance among parties to armed conflicts.

The role of the ICRC is indispensable. Together with States, the ICRC strives to ensure that civilians and victims of armed conflict are afforded protection – a key aim of IHL.

[Madame/Mr] Chair,

Ensuring strengthened understanding of, and compliance with, IHL by all must be our priority.

Australia, Canada and New Zealand will continue to work to that end, and we look forward to working closely with all States and the ICRC to address the pressing challenges in the field of IHL. We encourage all States to do the same.

Thank you.