

**Statement by Sweden on behalf of the Nordic countries
(Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway and Sweden)**

at the

**General Assembly,
Seventy-fifth Session**

Sixth Committee

**Agenda item 81:
Status of the Protocols Additional to the Geneva Conventions of 1949 and relating
to the protection of victims of armed conflicts**

United Nations, New York

17 October 2022

Mr./ Madam Chair,

I have the honor to speak on behalf of the five Nordic countries: Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway and Sweden.

The Nordic countries would like to welcome the Report of the Secretary-General (A/XX/XX) on the status of the Protocols Additional to the Geneva Conventions of 1949 and relating to the protection of victims of armed conflicts, and the useful update it provides. We encourage States to continue to report on the status of the protocols and measures taken to fully implement them at the national level.

Mr./ Madam Chair,

The importance of respecting and upholding international humanitarian law is as important as ever: in Russia's ongoing war of aggression against Ukraine as well as in all other armed conflicts. Civilians must not be targeted and all feasible precautions must be taken to protect civilians from the harmful effects of military operations. Intentional attacks on civilians and civilian objects and indiscriminate attacks seriously violate the laws of war and has led to tremendous and widespread civilian suffering.

Delivery of assistance to the affected populations must be ensured. The International Committee of the Red Cross and the Red Crescent and other organizations play a vital role and we must do what we can to safeguard their important mandate to deliver support in a neutral, impartial and independent way. It is unacceptable that more than 460 aid workers were victims of attacks last year, according to OCHA's statistics. 140 aid workers were killed, which is the highest number of fatalities since 2013. Another 203 were injured and 117 were kidnapped.

In light of this, it is encouraging that the Security Council in April last year unanimously adopted resolution 2573, inter alia demanding that all parties to armed conflict comply fully with their international humanitarian law obligations including to refrain from attacks against objects indispensable to the survival of the civilian population, and respecting and protecting humanitarian personnel and consignments used for humanitarian relief operations.

We are also encouraged that the Security Council in October last year adopted resolution 2601 on the protection of education in conflict, also by consensus. The resolution condemns attacks against schools, children and teachers, and urges parties to conflict to take all feasible measures to safeguard the right to education in armed conflict. Attacks against schools and the disruption of education in armed conflict is a problem of a massive scale in armed conflicts worldwide. In many places, children are terrified of going to school. Students and teachers are killed, raped and abducted. Schools and education facilities are occupied, bombed and destroyed, depriving whole generations of children of an opportunity to learn, in a safe space.

Mr./Madam Chair,

Those responsible for serious violations of international humanitarian law and those who have committed international crimes must be held accountable. It is important for the rules-based international order as a whole, but first and foremost for the victims who deserve justice and redress. Efforts to this end must be made primarily on the domestic level, but the international community can and should help where possible with financial or in-kind support or by exercising universal jurisdiction and starting their own preliminary investigations.

The Nordic countries fully support the International Criminal Court in fighting impunity, by investigating and prosecuting the most serious international crimes. In view of the dramatically increased demands on the ICC, we have increased our support to the Court this year, through contributions in funding and through the secondment of staff.

Mr./ Madam Chair,

That “in war, truth is the first casualty” has sadly been proven over and over again. Independent information sharing is crucial in this regard. We commend the work done by journalists and by civil society actors who defy threats and violence and report from conflicts around the world, including on violations of human rights and international humanitarian law.

Mr./Madam Chair,

All of the Nordic countries champion gender equality. We welcome the ongoing work of the ICRC and other entities in modernizing the interpretation of gender and international humanitarian law. Women, men, boys and girls have different perspectives and needs, which must be reflected not least as traditional roles are shifting. Women may be facing particular physical and psychological risks, as the updated commentary on the third Geneva Convention states, but are by no means only victims.

Let me lastly point to another threat, which also deserves our full attention. Climate change and environment degradation, which increase the risk of new conflicts and worsen already ongoing ones. We welcome the International Law Commission’s completion of its work on the protection of the environment in relation to armed conflict. The draft principles constitute a major step forward in the systematization of the law in this area.

All the Nordic countries are highly committed to curbing climate change with ambitious national targets, and in assisting countries and populations worst affected. The link between climate and conflict is a key priority of the Nordic countries in the Security Council as demonstrated by first Sweden’s and then Norway’s engagements as elected members.

Thank you.