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UNITED KINGDOM OF GREAT BRITAIN AND NORTHERN IRELAND

UNITED NATIONS GENERAL ASSEMBLY, SIXTH COMMITTEE,
UNGA77, AGENDA ITEM 81

STATUS OF THE PROTOCOLS ADDITIONAL TO THE GENEVA
CONVENTIONS OF 1949 AND RELATING TO THE PROTECTION
OF VICTIMS OF ARMED CONFLICTS

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Delivered by Jonathan Hollis

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Mr/Madam Chair,

The United Kingdom welcomes today's discussion on the Status of the Protocols Additional to the Geneva Conventions of 1949 and relating to the protection of victims of armed conflicts – a subject that remains depressingly relevant.

We were pleased to be able to submit to the Secretary-General earlier this year a detailed overview of the UK's activities relating to the implementation and promotion of International Humanitarian Law domestically and internationally in the reporting period 2020-2022. We would like to take this opportunity to highlight a selection of our key activities in that regard, which demonstrates the UK's continuing efforts in the field of IHL.

First, further to the publication of the UK's *Voluntary Report on the Implementation of IHL at the Domestic Level* in 2019, the UK - in collaboration with the British Red Cross - has continued to encourage other States to draft their own such voluntary reports, including in the form of providing them with practical assistance and support. In this regard, the UK has produced a toolkit to provide guidance for other States to research and draft their own reports, which is accessible online and available in various languages.

Second, the UK remains committed to tackling conflict-related sexual violence.

Initiatives in this area include the launch by the UK's Special Representative on Preventing Sexual Violence in Conflict in November

2021 of the '*Call to action to ensure the rights and wellbeing of children born of sexual violence in conflict*'. This was a first step in galvanising international action to support the tens of thousands of children who, due to the circumstances of their conception, are marginalised and stigmatised by their families and communities.

Meanwhile, the UK also sits on the Board of the Global Survivors Fund, founded by Nobel Laureates Dr Mukwege and Nadia Murad. The Fund provides redress across the world for survivors of sexual violence in conflict, for example through provision of compensation, livelihood packages, education and healthcare. Since its inception in 2019, the UK has provided £2.7 million to support their critical work.

The UK is also pleased to be hosting the *International Preventing Sexual Violence in Conflict Initiative Conference* in London at the end of November, marking 10 years since the UK launched this initiative and which is an opportunity for the international community to come together and commit to making further tangible progress in this area.

Third, the UK's National Committee on IHL continues to meet biannually to develop further, and disseminate understanding of, IHL policy and practice nationally, and to discuss ways to encourage international partners to do likewise.

The Committee is also leading on a proposal to produce a public-facing handbook that focuses on the role of international humanitarian law in preventing or mitigating conflict induced hunger. Working with the British Red Cross and selected academics, the handbook will gather relevant rules and practice in one place with a view to increasing knowledge

among practitioners, sharing best practice and identifying pathways for better implementation of IHL.

Finally, Mr/Madam Chair, support for international criminal justice and accountability remains a fundamental element of UK foreign policy. The UK continues to support the International Criminal Court, and international and hybrid tribunals. This is with a view to strengthening the rules-based international system, delivering justice for victims of the most serious crimes of international concern, and tackling impunity for serious violations of IHL, wherever they occur, **including by Russian forces in Ukraine**.

Mr/Madame Chair,

The United Kingdom remains fully committed to the promotion and implementation of International Humanitarian Law and we look forward to continued discussions and engagement on this topic.

Thank you, Mr/Madame Chair.
