



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

Mr. Chairman,

The 1977 Additional Protocols to the Geneva Conventions remain crucial cornerstones in the codification of the protection of victims of international and non-international armed conflicts.

My country has ratified the two Additional Protocols of 1977, as well as the Additional Protocol of 2005. Having accepted the competence of the International Humanitarian Fact-Finding Commission established under Article 90 of Additional Protocol I, we have been strong supporters of this Commission, which presently counts with a Portuguese member, serving in his personal capacity.

Accordingly, with a view to strengthening a regime that is meant to benefit Humanity as a whole, Portugal urges all States parties to the Geneva Conventions that have not yet done so to becoming parties to the Additional Protocols, and to make the declaration provided for under article 90 of Additional Protocol I.

Mr. Chairman,

Portugal thanks the Secretary-General for his report on the status of the 1977 Additional Protocols and conveys its appreciation for the information submitted by Member States and the International Committee of the Red Cross for this report.



That information includes measures taken to strengthen the existing body of International Humanitarian Law, and therefore is of great use for all humanitarian stakeholders, including States, International Organisations and the components of the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement.

The number of states parties to Additional Protocols I, II and III has not increased since this item was last on the agenda of the Sixth Committee in 2022. Even so, we must salute the several accessions to, and ratifications of, other key International Humanitarian Law instruments, as reported by the International Committee of the Red Cross.

This data bears witness to the fact that States recognise the need for, and the usefulness of, being bound by treaties on various topics with relevance to armed conflict – including treaties on disarmament, non-proliferation, arms control, and international criminal justice.

Mr. Chairman,

The last time this item was on the agenda of the Sixth Committee, we were celebrating the 45th anniversary of the adoption of the 1977 Protocols Additional to the Geneva Conventions of 1949.

This year, we commemorate the 75th anniversary of the adoption of the Geneva Conventions themselves. It is the time to reflect on the lives that have been saved and protected thanks to them. It is the time to praise legacy of these Conventions and to renew our commitment to preserving humanity in armed conflict.



It is also the time to reject silence in the face of so many and repeated violations of International Humanitarian Law. Effective implementation of the Geneva Conventions and of its Additional Protocols and customary IHL has always been challenging. But the scope and seriousness of the breaches of the rules of war that we still see today are unacceptable.

Persons and objects protected under IHL, such as civilians, humanitarian personnel, cultural property and humanitarian, religious, and medical infrastructure, are being deliberately threatened and attacked. We must raise our voices and mobilize our institutions to ensure that International Humanitarian Law is fully implemented, without exceptions or concessions.

At the same time, new technologies of warfare, like those with autonomous functions, raise concerns of ethical, legal and humanitarian nature that need to be addressed in a more productive way.

Portugal was pleased to engage on these issues with other Members States, the International Committee of the Red Cross, and other relevant humanitarian stakeholders, at the recently concluded 34th International Conference of the Red Cross and Red Crescent.

Mr. Chairman,

Making International Humanitarian Law accessible and understandable is paramount to ensure compliance with it. Portugal welcomes the tireless work that the International Committee of the Red Cross has done in recent years to disseminate contents in Portuguese, the most spoken language in the Southern Hemisphere. Among those contents are the 2020 Guidelines on the Protection of the Natural Environment in Armed Conflict, and the Customary IHL Database.



My delegation's closing words are of tribute to all victims of armed conflict, and the humanitarians who support them and whose work bears witness to the Fundamental Principles of Humanity, Impartiality, Neutrality, Independence, Voluntary Service, Unity, and Universality.

As the last couple of years have shown us, no region is forever free of the torments of war. And thus, the international legal framework relating to the protection of victims of armed conflicts remains one of the most important instruments in preserving and defending human lives and human dignity.

Portugal therefore urges all parties to armed conflicts to respect and ensure respect for International Humanitarian Law, including for the Additional Protocols to the Geneva Conventions.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.