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UNITED KINGDOM OF GREAT BRITAIN AND NORTHERN IRELAND

UNITED NATIONS GENERAL ASSEMBLY, SIXTH COMMITTEE,
UNGA 79, AGENDA ITEM XX

**[Status of the Protocols Additional to the Geneva Conventions of 1949 and
relating to the protection of victims of armed conflicts]**

[4-5] November 2024

Delivered by **[XXX]**

Check against delivery

Thank you, [Madame/Mr] Chair,

The United Kingdom takes this opportunity to reaffirm its commitment to the implementation of International Humanitarian Law. We welcome the discussion on the Status of the Protocols Additional to the Geneva Conventions of 1949 and relating to the protection of victims of armed conflicts. We extend our gratitude to the Secretary-General for the comprehensive report on this agenda item, and to States and the International Committee of the Red Cross for their valuable contributions.

The UK's submission on our continuing efforts to implement and promote IHL both domestically and internationally is reflected in the Secretary General's report. In addition, we would like to use this opportunity to highlight the following examples in this regard.

Firstly, the UK is proud of its strong record of implementation, compliance and dissemination of international humanitarian law. In October 2024, at an event co-hosted with the British Red Cross commemorating the 75th anniversary of the Geneva Conventions, we launched the second edition of the UK's Voluntary Report entitled *On the Implementation of International Humanitarian Law at the Domestic Level*. This followed our original publication in 2019. This second edition provides an updated

picture of the UK's IHL efforts in a single document accessible to anyone, whether a practitioner or ordinary member of the public. It includes new topics, such as the protection of civilians in armed conflict, mutual legal assistance, human security in military operations, media professionals in armed conflict, public curiosity, cyber warfare, outer space, and autonomous weapons systems. At the 34th International Conference of the Red Cross and Red Crescent in Geneva in October 2024, we were pleased to co-host a side event on voluntary reporting, as part of our efforts to encourage and provide practical support to *other* States as they develop their own Voluntary Reports.

The UK firmly believes that the publication of national Voluntary Reports helps to enhance both national and international compliance with IHL. Self-examination by states makes a powerful statement about our shared commitment to promoting IHL and to ensuring its application in practice. We hope that more States will follow our example, demonstrating their own record on domestic implementation.

Additionally, this year we are celebrating the 25th anniversary of the UK's National Committee on IHL - we continue to promote the formation of such Committees and have offered practical assistance to those wishing to do likewise. In this regard, the Committee has established informal

partnerships with the National IHL Committees and Commissions of other States. By way of example, on 31 October 2024, the UK's National IHL Committee signed a Memorandum of Understanding with the Ukraine Interagency Commission on the Application and Implementation of IHL. This established a general framework for future co-operation between our respective Committees, with a view to helping strengthen the capacity of the Ukraine IHL Commission.

This year, we were pleased to participate in the Sixth Commonwealth Red Cross and Red Crescent Conference on IHL in South Africa and to send a senior-level UK delegation to the 34th International Conference of the Red Cross and Red Crescent. At the latter, the UK co-hosted successful side events on the protection of cultural heritage and locally led actions.

We welcome the outcome of the 34th International Conference, including the adoption of five resolutions, which address critical IHL and humanitarian challenges in an evolving world.

Finally, the UK remains committed to supporting accountability mechanisms to assist in ensuring compliance with IHL. As a strong supporter of the International Criminal Court, the UK works with other States Parties to help strengthen the Court to enable it to fulfil its mandate

under the Rome Statute. The Court plays a pivotal role in delivering justice for victims and putting an end to impunity for the most serious crimes of international concern

Chair,

As conflicts continue to evolve, it is more important than ever to reaffirm our commitment to upholding the core principles of IHL. They are the basis of the preservation of our shared humanity in times of war and reflect our fundamental shared values: respect for human dignity and respect for the rule of law.

The UK remains fully dedicated to the promotion and implementation of IHL and we look forward to continued discussions and engagement with those concerned to address the pressing challenges in this field.

Thank you, Chair.