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Agenda Item 79

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

**Statement**

**on behalf of the Nordic countries**

by  
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Mr Chairperson,

I have the honour to address the Sixth Committee on behalf of the five Nordic countries: Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway and Sweden.

The 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the first Geneva Convention is a moment to welcome the progress achieved in the field of international humanitarian law and to evaluate what further improvements still need to be made.

The situation in the world today clearly shows that the protection of victims of armed conflict must improve. The legal framework exists, but lack of respect for the agreed rules and principles remains a challenge that has to be addressed. In this regards we welcome the ongoing discussions on a number of topics on how to improve the situation for victims of armed conflict. The Nordic countries in particular welcome the initiative by Switzerland in cooperation with the ICRC on enhancing and ensuring the effectiveness of mechanisms of compliance.

The Nordic countries would also like to underline the process regarding health care in danger with the aim to improve the conditions for those who work in the field with providing health care to the wounded and sick during armed conflict. The recent decision adopted by the Security Council on protection of humanitarian personnel was also a very important development in this regard.

The Nordic countries also welcome the initiative by the ICRC regarding detention and the legal protection of persons deprived of their liberty in relation in non-international armed conflict.

Looking forward, the Arms Trade Treaty will enter into force on 24 December. The Nordic countries believe that the treaty will make a considerable contribution to the fight against irresponsible and uncontrolled international trade in conventional weapons. The treaty does not only create an obligation for States to introduce and maintain control over regulated arms trade. Moreover, the treaty, through explicit references to respect for human rights and international humanitarian law, will globally strengthen respect for and compliance with these important norms thus limiting human suffering. These positive effects of the Arms Trade Treaty can only be realised if a majority of States accede to the treaty and effectively implement its provisions. All five Nordic countries have ratified or approved the Arms Trade Treaty and encourage States which have not yet done so to ratify or approve the treaty as soon as possible.

We must continue to work against impunity for serious violations of international humanitarian law and human rights; persons suspected of war crimes, genocide and crimes against humanity must be held accountable. Each state has a duty and a responsibility to investigate and prosecute such crimes. It is primarily at the domestic level that solutions to the impunity gap must be found. The International Criminal Court is a court of last resort and is of great importance to uphold international humanitarian law and human rights law and to end impunity for mass atrocity crimes.

The role and importance of the International Committee of the Red Cross must be emphasised. We express our deep appreciation for the valuable work carried out by the ICRC and for its efforts for the protection of persons in armed conflict, towards dissemination of international humanitarian law, and training given on this subject.

The 32<sup>nd</sup> International Red Cross and Red Crescent Conference to be convened in 2015 will be an opportunity for states as well as the Red Cross and Red Crescent movement to identify and propose action to ensure that international humanitarian law remains practical and relevant in providing protection to all persons in armed conflict. In view of this conference, the Nordic countries would in particular like to call on all States to engage constructively in the important process on strengthening compliance with international humanitarian law in order for the conference to deliver strong results on the issue.

Finally, we welcome the Report of the Secretary General (A/69/184) on the status of the Protocols Additional to the Geneva Conventions of 1949 and relating to the protection of victims of armed conflicts.

Let me conclude by recalling that all states have a duty to respect and ensure respect for international humanitarian law. Joint efforts to promote and improve compliance with the Geneva Conventions and their Additional Protocols are still needed and must remain a priority.

Thank you Mr Chairperson