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Agenda Item 81

**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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New York

Mr. Chairperson,

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

The Nordic countries welcome the Report of the Secretary General (A/71/183) on the status of the Protocols Additional to the Geneva Conventions of 1949 and relating to the protection of victims of armed conflicts and thank the Member States that have provided information.

There is a dire need in the world today to uphold the norms of international humanitarian law - norms that we too often see are disregarded by parties to armed conflicts.

The legal framework exists, but lack of respect for agreed rules and principles remains all too clear. The Nordic countries therefore welcome the continued leadership of Switzerland and the ICRC in their roles as facilitators of the State-driven intergovernmental process on strengthening compliance as provided for in resolution 2 of the 32nd International Conference of the Red Cross and Red Crescent. In addition, we welcome the continuation of the important process of strengthening international humanitarian law protecting persons deprived of their liberty, as put forward in resolution 1 at the same conference.

We welcome the UN Secretary-General's Agenda for Humanity presented at the World Humanitarian Summit in Istanbul this year. The agenda calls on global leaders to commit to five core responsibilities in the name of our shared humanity, the second being upholding the norms that safe guard humanity.

The Nordic countries would like to underline the importance of improving the protection and the conditions for those who work with providing health care to the wounded and sick during armed conflict. We are appalled by the ongoing deliberate attacks on hospitals. In this regard we welcome the important milestone on this topic: Security Council Resolution 2286 (2016), in which attacks against medical facilities and personnel in conflict situations are strongly condemned. We also note with appreciation resolution 4 adopted at the 32nd International Conference of the Red Cross and Red Crescent on protection on the delivery of health care. We commend the efforts made by numerous medical and humanitarian personnel including National Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies to deliver health care under extremely dangerous conditions.

Mr. Chairperson,

The Nordic countries condemn, in the strongest possible terms, sexual and gender-based violence, in all circumstances, including in armed conflict. Further we recall the obligations to protect and assist survivors of sexual and gender-based violence in armed conflict which was also underlined in resolution 3 of the 32nd International Conference of the Red Cross and Red Crescent.

We know that men and women, and boys and girls, all suffer the consequences of violence and armed conflict, but the impact is profoundly different. To ensure equal and non-discriminatory application of humanitarian law it is necessary to integrate a gender sensitive approach. This also contributes to effective humanitarian assistance, including safe and accessible health care.

More important than ever, we must continue to work against impunity for serious violations of international humanitarian law and human rights; persons who have committed war crimes, genocide or crimes against humanity must be held accountable. Each state has a duty to investigate and prosecute such crimes. It is primarily at the domestic level that impunity must be fought. The International Criminal Court is a court of last resort.

The role and importance of the International Committee of the Red Cross can hardly be overestimated. We express our deep appreciation for the valuable work carried out by the ICRC and National Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies for their efforts to protect persons in armed conflict, towards dissemination of international humanitarian law, and training given on this subject.

Let me conclude by recalling the urgency to ensure respect for international humanitarian law, to provide protection for civilians and medical personnel and to end impunity. All states have a duty to respect and ensure respect for international humanitarian law.

Thank you Mr Chairperson