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UNITED KINGDOM OF GREAT BRITAIN AND NORTHERN IRELAND

UNITED NATIONS GENERAL ASSEMBLY, SIXTH COMMITTEE,
UNGA75, AGENDA ITEM 87

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

4 NOVEMBER 2020

Delivered by Melina Lito

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Mr/Madame Chair,

The United Kingdom welcomes 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.

In accordance with the UN General Assembly's resolution 73/204, we are preparing a detailed statement outlining the UK's activities related to implementing and promoting International Humanitarian Law (IHL) domestically and internationally. In the meantime, we would like to highlight the following, which demonstrate the UK's continuing activities and efforts in the field of IHL.

In March 2019, the UK published a Voluntary Report on Domestic Implementation of IHL. The publication of this report reflects the UK's determined commitment to the proper implementation of, and compliance with, International Humanitarian Law. In collaboration with the British Red Cross, the UK is providing assistance and support to other States to produce reports detailing their activities to implement IHL. We have produced a toolkit to provide guidance for States to research and draft their reports. It includes two optional templates, as well as guidance on how to publish a report. It is presently available in English, French and Arabic, while additional translations are planned.

In June 2020, the UK launched the draft Murad Code, created alongside Nobel Laureate Nadia Murad and the Institute for International Criminal Investigations, to strengthen justice for survivors of sexual violence in conflicts around the world. It upholds international standards for recording crimes with sensitivity to survivors, reinforcing evidence collection and strengthening justice and accountability while preventing the further traumatising of survivors. In October 2019, the UK appointed two Preventing Sexual Violence in Conflict Survivor Champions, Nadine Tunasi and Kolbassia Haoussou, who advocate for support for all survivors and children born of conflict-related sexual violence.

In August 2020, the UK published its approach paper on Protection of Civilians. The paper builds on the published 2010 Protection of Civilians strategy, highlighting the work done by the UK Government in the past 10 years to further this important agenda. We are firmly committed to promoting the Protection of Civilians in Armed Conflict and has been at the forefront of initiatives in recent years promoting the issue, including in strengthening state capacity and encouraging all States to respect IHL.

More widely, the UK continues to support the international dissemination activities of the British Red Cross including the joint British Red Cross/ICRC project which ensures that the practice section of the ICRC Study on Customary IHL is kept up-to-date and is accessible on a database. The UK offers general IHL training to our own policy and legal advisers but also to legal advisers from partner armed forces.

The UK National Committee on IHL meets biannually to develop further, and disseminate understanding of, IHL policy and practice nationally, and to discuss ways to encourage international partners to do likewise, particularly with the Commonwealth. The Committee, composed of legal and policy representations across government departments, also encourages the dissemination and training of IHL to the armed forces, police, civil servants, teachers, the judiciary, the medical profession, journalists and others.

The UK also participated in the Fifth Commonwealth Red Cross and Red Crescent Conference on International Humanitarian Law, held in Kigali, Rwanda. A UK delegation was also sent to the 33rd International Conference of the Red Cross and Red Crescent, held in Geneva, Switzerland, in December 2019. At the latter, among other activities, the UK co-sponsored a side event on the protection of media professionals in armed conflicts. The UK also made pledges on Voluntary Reporting, PSVI and Cash assistance.

Lastly, support for international criminal justice and accountability is a fundamental element of UK foreign policy. We reiterate the UK's support for

the role of the International Criminal Court, the International Residual Mechanism for Criminal Tribunals and other tribunals established to address serious violations of IHL. The UK has also supported the establishment of evidence gathering mechanisms and fact-finding missions such as the International, Impartial and Independent Mechanism for Syria. The UK believes that its candidate for judge at the International Criminal Court, Judge Joanna Korner, will make a significant contribution to the important work of the Court in ending impunity for those who commit serious violations of IHL.

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.