GLOBAL IHL INITIATIVE, FIRST CONSULTATION WITH STATES ON WORKSTREAM 3, IHL AND PEACE

Statement of the Executive Director of the Geneva Peacebuilding Platform, 26 May 2025

Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentlemen,
Dear Colleagues,

Thank you very much for inviting the Geneva Peacebuilding Platform to this important consultation in the context of the Global IHL Initiative.

The Geneva Peacebuilding Platform works as an amplifying voice of several peacebuilding organizations in Geneva and around the world. These organizations work in the area of prevention of conflict, security, human rights, refugees, development, good governance, justice and environmental protection. The ICRC and the IFRC is also part of our network. Indeed, in as much as human rights and refugee law are a crucial part of any peacebuilding efforts, we believe that humanitarian work and IHL is at the core of peacebuilding in at least three ways. This discussion is particularly important today, at a time where respect for core humanitarian law norms and values, is seriously undermined, as was reminded by several delegations.

1) IHL is important for peace **before** the conflict breaks out, in particular by educating the armed forces and the general public on the rules applicable in times of war. Indeed IHL also participates to a certain extent to the **prevention** of conflicts by reminding why this body of law exists in the first place: to protect the wounded sick, as well as detained combatants and of course the civilian population from the horrors of war. Reminding and educating about the scope of the human tragedy, destruction and immense suffering that wars represent, is the best way to remind all of us about the essential and precious value of peace.

2) Second **during** armed conflict. A lot has been said about how compliance with IHL during armed conflict is crucial for peacebuilding. Compliance may weaken the risks of negative reciprocity or to put it more prosaically by avoiding that parties to an armed conflict resort to 'an eye for an eye' method of war. In

addition, IHL which is built on the values of dignity and respect of the human person, also aims at diffusing hate and anger among combatant and civilians. This, in turn will allow for the possibility of reconciliation in post conflict situations.

In addition, and as was also reminded by the participants, IHL is a tool that allows **mediation** between parties to the conflict, not only during hostilities but also during the negotiation of ceasefires and peace agreements. As many armed conflicts are non-international in nature, IHL as a tool for mediation, as a common language between parties to armed conflicts, is particularly important when it comes to engaging armed groups, which are also bound to respect IHL.

3) Thirdly and finally, we strongly believe that justice and accountability for war crimes, and other international crimes, **in post conflict situations**, undertaken at the right moment and in carefully established procedures is also essential to any lasting peace. However politically delicate, respect of the law and proper accountability when it is violated reinforces its credibility and thus its efficiency. In too many post conflict contexts, victims do not have the opportunity to have their voices heard, many grievances and profound trauma are never healed. Impunity also fuels resentment. Transitional justice processes are a key element to the possibility of lasting peace.

Many organizations at the Geneva Peacebuilding Platform as well as States, by signing up to the 1949 Geneva Conventions and the UN Charter, are fully aware of these principles and work tirelessly towards peacebuilding at all levels, local, national and international ones. For these reasons, the GVA Peacebuilding Platform commends the efforts of several states and the ICRC to reinforce the commitment to IHL during the particularly trying times so many victims of armed conflicts around the world are living in and we stand ready to support the Global IHL Initiative in any way we can.

Thank you for your attention.