



United Nations General Assembly | Sixth Committee
Status of the Protocols Additional to the Geneva Conventions of 1949
and relating to the protection of victims of armed conflicts
16-17 October 2018

(check against delivery)

Mr. Chairman,

Brazil aligns itself with the statement delivered by El Salvador on behalf of Community of Latin American and Caribbean States (CELAC) and takes this opportunity to address some issues from a national perspective.

Brazil welcomes the report of the Secretary General under this agenda item and thank Member States, as well as the International Committee of the Red Cross for their contributions. Brazil encourages those that have not yet done so to consider providing the Secretary-General with information on their implementation of international humanitarian law.

Mr. Chairman,

This year marks the 150th anniversary of the Saint Petersburg Declaration, whose importance goes beyond the proscription of certain types of weapons. Together with the Geneva Convention of 1864, these instruments are at the origins of a basic idea that is still valid today: that the necessities of war ought to yield to the requirements of humanity. IHL embodies the notion that even when law fails and conflict erupts, there are still rules aimed at protecting the most vulnerable, avoiding unnecessary suffering and maintaining humanity during hostilities.

Brazil sees with great concern the growing lack of respect for IHL. The disregard for the most fundamental norms during armed conflicts has already caused immense human suffering, claiming the lives of innocent civilians and leaving a path of destruction and despair.

The first IHL norms emerged when war was not prohibited, and there was no international organization with a collective security system aimed at maintaining peace. The creation of the United Nations, along with a clear prohibition of the use of force, has raised hopes that IHL would fall into disuse: there would be no need for rules governing wars had we achieved the goal of maintaining peace. Yet, we still witness countless international and internal armed conflicts across the globe, with dire consequences to civilians especially to persons belonging to most vulnerable groups. Military action inevitably results in high human and material costs, and if we are truly willing to avoid violations of IHL and to protect civilians, we should first commit ourselves to only consider resorting to force after exhausting all other options, and always in line with the UN Charter.

The existence of numerous armed conflicts around the globe, many of which long lasting, shows how international humanitarian law still has a key role to play. It is not only a matter of developing new rules governing war, but of finding ways to ensure that they are respected. If all