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 session of the Sixth Committee
Status of the Protocols Additional to the Geneva Conventions of 1949
and relating to the protection of victims of armed conflicts
(Agenda item 83)
Statement by Portugal – Mr. Sergio Carvalho (Legal Adviser)

Mr. Chairman,

Portugal aligns itself with the statement delivered by the European Union on the
Status of the Protocols Additional to the Geneva Conventions of 1949 and relating
to the protection of victims of armed conflicts and would like to convey the
following remarks in its national capacity.

We thank the Secretary General for his report, as well as the International
Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) and the Member States who submitted
contributions on measures taken to strengthen the existing body of international
humanitarian law (IHL).

Mr. Chairman,

In the report I have just mentioned, the ICRC submitted information on several
accessions and ratifications to the Additional Protocols and other pertinent
international legally binding instruments of IHL, on the period from June 2018 to
June 2020.

These facts are to be welcomed: in addition to abiding to the customary IHL that
is already binding on them, States are giving their consent to become bound to
treaties on various subjects with relevance to armed conflict – such as the

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protection of victims of armed conflict, the protection of cultural heritage,
International Criminal Justice, disarmament, non-proliferation and arms control.

Nevertheless, the main concern regarding IHL remains: its implementation. The
most pressing implementation problems relate to both old and new challenges –
from State capacity to adequately train and supervise its armed forces on IHL
matters to new means and methods of warfare and new actors in armed conflict.

With this in mind, in December 2019 the Thirty-third International Conference of
the Red Cross and Red Crescent adopted the resolution “Bringing IHL home: a
road map for better national implementation of international humanitarian law”.

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Portuguese authorities maintain a close and fruitful collaboration with the
Portuguese Red Cross, having established a permanent consultation mechanism
that has met to review matters such as the follow-up of the resolutions and
pledges of the International Conferences of the Red Cross and Red Crescent.

Another example of that good relationship are the specific pledges submitted by
Portugal and the Portuguese Red Cross at the Thirty-third International
Conference of the Red Cross and Red Crescent, in December 2019. One of those
pledges relates to “Establishing a national committee on International
Humanitarian Law in Portugal”.

Mr. Chairman,

In closing, my delegation would like to pay tribute to all humanitarians,
professional or voluntaries, whose work embodies the Fundamental Principles of
Humanity, Impartiality, Neutrality, Independence, Voluntary Service, Unity and
Universality.

Every day, stories of compliance with International Humanitarian Law save and
defend human dignity and human lives. Portugal calls on all parties to armed
conflict to multiply these success stories and to respect and ensure respect for
IHL.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.