

32nd International Conference of the Red Cross and the Red Crescent - General Debate
Statement by Ambassador Patricia O'Brien, Permanent Representative of Ireland

Mr. Chairman

We are alarmed at the truly shocking scale of death, injury and displacement caused by the many armed conflicts that have begun or intensified since this Conference last convened four years ago. Civilians continue to bear the overwhelming brunt of these conflicts. While we cannot overstate the importance of conflict prevention and resolution, it goes without saying that if the existing rules of IHL were followed much of the human suffering caused by contemporary armed conflicts would not occur.

Indeed the frequent failure by both the armed forces of States and non-state armed groups to respect these rules is, in our view, the greatest current obstacle to the protection of victims of armed conflict. It is for this reason that we join with so many other states here in wishing to see the creation of a strong mechanism to ensure greater compliance with IHL. We look forward to working with all delegations at this Conference to achieve this important objective.

Mr. Chairman

Ireland's approach in providing assistance to victims of armed conflicts and other emergencies is to stress the importance of coherent, complimentary and coordinated actions. In this respect we wish to emphasise the importance of systematically integrating protection and gender-based violence initiatives into policy and practice to protect the most vulnerable, especially women and girls. In our assistance programmes we also recognise the importance of enhancing resilience by strengthening the capacity of countries, communities, institutions and individuals to anticipate and, adapt to shocks and stresses. In addition, we believe it essential when mitigating the impact of conflict to enhance the security of humanitarian staff. We look forward to exploring these important issues in the Commissions and other forums of discussion this week.

Finally, Mr. Chairman, we wish to commend the ICRC for its very thorough and cogent Concluding Report on Strengthening IHL to protect Persons deprived of their Liberty. We agree with the ICRC's analysis that the absence of clear standards relating to detention of persons in non-international armed conflict exposes detainees to serious risks. We agree also that there is a clear need to strengthen IHL in this area and that the immediate priority is to begin work as soon as possible on an outcome instrument that addresses the four areas of humanitarian concern identified by Resolution 1 adopted at our last Conference. We look forward to working with all delegations on this essential task.

Thank you Mr Chairman