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5TH COMMONWEALTH RED CROSS AND RED CRESCENT CONFERENCE ON IHL

OUTCOME DOCUMENT

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5th COMMONWEALTH RED CROSS AND RED CRESCENT CONFERENCE ON INTERNATIONAL HUMANITARIAN LAW

Celebrating the Geneva Conventions and building respect for IHL:
A Commonwealth Perspective

10 to 14 June 2019
Kigali, Republic of Rwanda

OUTCOME STATEMENT

Participants from Commonwealth States and Commonwealth National Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies attending the 5th Commonwealth Red Cross and Red Crescent Conference on International Humanitarian Law (IHL);

meeting in Kigali, Rwanda (the 'Kigali Conference'),

10 to 14 June 2019;

acknowledging that the strength of the Commonwealth lies in its diversity, respect for all States and peoples and in its shared values, principles and concern for individuals and groups in vulnerable situations;

noting the important relationship of co-operation and mutual support between the Commonwealth and the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement;

mindful of the 25th anniversary of the genocide in Rwanda, and recognizing the efforts of the Rwandan people to implement humanitarian principles over the past decades;

recognising the significance of the 70th anniversary of the adoption of the Geneva Conventions of 1949, appreciating their position as the cornerstone of contemporary IHL and recognising the importance of working to improve their implementation;

also recognising the significance of the 10th anniversary of the adoption of the African Union Convention for the Protection and Assistance of Internally Displaced Persons in Africa, 2009, appreciating its role in preventing displacement, protecting and assisting internally displaced persons and realising durable solutions in Africa and recognising its potential in setting global standards;

recognising that this year marks the 20th anniversary of the adoption of the Second Protocol of 1999 to The Hague Convention for the Protection of Cultural Property in the Event of Armed Conflict, 1954, and *highlighting* its importance in providing greater protection to cultural property in peacetime, as well as in the event of armed conflict;

recalling the obligations of Commonwealth States to respect and ensure respect for IHL, and to hold those who violate IHL accountable;

recognising the common legal heritage of many Commonwealth States, which provides a strong basis upon which to share experience and expertise and to encourage the adoption of effective national laws and good practices;

noting and building upon the achievements made since the first Commonwealth Red Cross and Red Crescent Conference on IHL in 2003 and *welcoming*, as a consequence, the regular meetings of Commonwealth States, National Societies and of National IHL Committees;

conscious that the Agenda of the Kigali Conference provided a valuable platform for dialogue on numerous IHL topics of concern to Commonwealth States and National Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, some of which will also be addressed at the 33rd International Conference of the Red Cross and Red Crescent, which will take place in Geneva, from 9 to 12 December 2019;

expressing appreciation to the Government of the Republic of Rwanda, the Rwanda Red Cross and the International Committee of the Red Cross for co-hosting the Kigali Conference and to the British Red Cross and the Commonwealth Secretariat for their support for the event;

agree to:

1. give greater priority to promoting respect for IHL in their policies, practice and law;
2. encourage Commonwealth States to ratify or accede to IHL treaties, including the three Additional Protocols to the Geneva Conventions, to which they are not yet party;
3. work together to assist Commonwealth States in establishing National IHL Committees or similar entities to advise and assist governments to become party to relevant legal instruments and to take actions, beginning in peacetime, towards further implementation of and respect for the law;
4. encourage Commonwealth States to examine the IHL treaties to which they are party and to conduct, with the support of their National Societies and of their National IHL Committees where they exist, a study or report on the domestic implementation of their obligations under those treaties;
5. where necessary, encourage Commonwealth States, with the support of their National IHL Committees where they exist, to adopt effective legislative and other measures to implement those IHL treaties to which they are party, including measures to address serious violations of IHL;

6. invite Commonwealth States and National Societies to continue to work together in areas of mutual humanitarian concern, such as those topics addressed at this conference, which include but are not limited to protection of civilians, prevention of and response to sexual and gender-based violence, disaster risk management, and addressing violations of IHL;
7. prepare, individually and together with other Commonwealth States and National Societies, for the 33rd International Conference of the Red Cross and Red Crescent, with reference to the proposed objectives and themes and guided among other things by the dialogue at the Kigali Conference;
8. consider one or more individual and / or joint pledges to the 33rd International Conference, in particular those complementary to the IHL Roadmap and / or related to the Conference themes of IHL, shifting vulnerabilities and trust in humanitarian action;
9. maintain and extend contacts and co-operation among Conference participants, including the Commonwealth Secretariat, the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, the International Committee of the Red Cross and National IHL Committees;
10. hold a Sixth Commonwealth Red Cross and Red Crescent Conference on IHL in advance of the 34th International Conference of the Red Cross and Red Crescent, which is likely to be held in 2023, and strive to ensure that all Commonwealth States, National Societies, the International Committee of the Red Cross, the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies and the Commonwealth Secretariat actively support and participate in such an event, including encouraging one State and National Red Cross or Red Crescent Society to offer to host the conference;
11. invite the Commonwealth Secretariat to continue to work to include IHL on the agenda of relevant Commonwealth meetings and to continue its valuable work in the field of IHL such as awareness raising and promotion of the ratification / accession and implementation of IHL instruments.

Kigali, Rwanda
14 June 2019