

**Fourth Meeting of Representatives of National Committees on
International Humanitarian Law of Commonwealth States
14-15 June 2017, Swakopmund, Namibia
“Generating respect for IHL: A Commonwealth perspective”**

OUTCOME DOCUMENT

Representatives of Commonwealth National Committees on International Humanitarian Law (IHL) and Commonwealth Governments meeting in Swakopmund, Namibia from 14 to 15 June 2017,

recalling the value and outcomes of previous Meetings of Commonwealth National IHL Committees in Nairobi in 2005, in New Delhi in 2009 and in Port of Spain in 2013, as well as the value of international fora that include Commonwealth States’ participation and reflect Commonwealth values, such as the 32nd International Conference of the Red Cross and Red Crescent (December 2015) and the 4th Universal Meeting of National IHL Committees and Similar Bodies (December 2016),

noting the progress made in IHL treaty accession and implementation, and the establishment of National IHL Committees since these Meetings, as well as the work undertaken by the Commonwealth Secretariat in this area,

noting and appreciating that the Commonwealth values of commitment to dignity, humanity and the rule of law are embodied in the Geneva Conventions of 1949 to which all Commonwealth States are party,

recognising the role of the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement in responding to humanitarian needs and promoting IHL,

recalling the obligations of Commonwealth States to respect and ensure respect for IHL, as contained in the Geneva Conventions of 1949,

recalling the important role that National IHL Committees can play in the implementation of IHL and encouraging continued commitment to these Committees,

commemorating the 40th anniversary of the adoption of the Additional Protocols of 1977 to the Geneva Conventions of 1949 and recalling United Nations General Assembly Resolution 71/144 of 13 December 2016 on the Status of the Protocols Additional to the Geneva Conventions of 1949 and Relating to the Protection of Victims of Armed Conflicts,

recognising the common legal heritage of Commonwealth States which provides a good basis on which to share IHL expertise and experience, provide peer-to-peer support, and to encourage the adoption of national laws and good practice,

expressing their thanks to the Government of the Republic of Namibia, the Namibia Red Cross Society, the International Committee of the Red Cross, the British Red Cross, and the Commonwealth Secretariat for their support in organising this Meeting,

hereby agree, where appropriate, to:

1. Continue to promote peer-to-peer engagement between National IHL Committees and other similar bodies, including through the establishment of sub-regional and/or virtual platforms, and to request the ICRC to facilitate fora for such engagement;
2. Consider designating a permanent focal point from among members of National IHL Committees with a view to facilitating contact with other Committees;
3. Consider creating mechanisms within National IHL Committees with a view to ensuring the continuity of the work of the Committee;
4. Consider the establishment of National IHL Committees or similar bodies in countries where they do not yet exist;
5. Encourage States to become party to Additional Protocols I and II to the Geneva Conventions of 1949, where applicable;
6. Encourage States to recognise the competence of the International Humanitarian Fact-Finding Commission (IHFFC), and to make use of its services, where applicable;
7. Promote the use of existing tools that facilitate the process of dissemination and implementation of IHL, and encourage the Commonwealth Secretariat and ICRC to continue to develop such tools;
8. Call on the Commonwealth Secretariat to facilitate the inclusion of IHL in the agenda of Commonwealth Heads of Government Meetings and other relevant Commonwealth Meetings;
9. Encourage efforts towards the universal ratification and effective implementation of the Arms Trade Treaty of 2013;
10. Encourage States to consider becoming party to the 1954 Hague Convention on the Protection of Cultural Property in the Event of Armed Conflict and its Protocols, and to look to relevant model laws and examples within the Commonwealth of existing implementing legislation for these instruments;
11. Encourage consideration of suitable engagement on IHL between National IHL Committees and Parliamentarians, in particular the relevant national, regional and Commonwealth Parliamentary bodies;
12. Promote the involvement of National Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies in the composition and work of National IHL Committees, and promote meaningful engagement with civil society in the dissemination of IHL; and
13. Encourage Commonwealth States to consider hosting or participating in the Fifth Commonwealth Red Cross and Red Crescent Conference on International Humanitarian Law, to be held in 2019, prior to the 33rd International Conference of the Red Cross and Red Crescent later in the year.

Swakopmund, Namibia, 15 June 2017