



OPEN SESSION OF THE COMMITTEE TO PROMOTE RESPECT FOR INTERNATIONAL HUMANITARIAN LAW ON THE IHL DIMENSION OF THE RESPONSIBILITY TO PROTECT

24 March 2013 (9 – 11 a.m.)
San Francisco Convention Centre, Quito
Salones Lequerica & Montufar, level -2

Concept note

The Committee's decision to focus on the relationship between international humanitarian law (IHL) and the responsibility to protect was based on the subject item chosen by the IPU's First Standing Committee, "Enforcing the responsibility to protect: The role of parliament in safeguarding civilians' lives", which should result in the relevant resolution being adopted at the 128th IPU Assembly.

The Open Session will take place before the plenary debate of the First Standing Committee so as to feed into the Standing Committee's deliberations. As its name suggests, the session is open to all participants at the 128th Assembly, its purpose being to raise awareness of the important role of parliaments and parliamentarians on IHL issues.

As underscored in the joint IPU-ICRC Handbook for Parliamentarians on Respect for International Humanitarian Law (1999), "armed conflicts inevitably give rise to abusive behaviour, and the forces directly involved in the hostilities are not the only ones to suffer the consequences. In the midst of the battle, increasingly both the victim and the object at stake, it is the civilian population that 'pays the price'".

IHL consists of a set of international laws aimed at limiting the effects of war on people and objects. It covers the protection of victims of war; limitation and/or prohibition of different types of weapons; protection of certain objects; and the repression of war crimes. The concept of "responsibility to protect" was endorsed by 191 countries in United Nations General Assembly Resolution 60/1 on the 2005 World Summit Outcome. It refers to the responsibility of each individual State to protect its populations from genocide, war crimes, ethnic cleansing and crimes against humanity.

The nexus between IHL and the responsibility to protect remains hazy despite significant overlap between principles of international law and the underlying humanitarian priority. The Open Session will clarify that connection and focus on the role of parliament in implementation of both.

Chaired by a member of the IHL Committee, panellists will be invited to introduce the notion of the responsibility to protect and make the link with IHL. The presentations will be followed by an interactive exchange between the panellists and the audience on the role of parliaments in this area.