



ACCOMPANYING STATEMENT

CALL FOR ACTION TO STRENGTHEN RESPECT FOR INTERNATIONAL HUMANITARIAN LAW AND PRINCIPLED HUMANITARIAN ACTION

Australia recognises that international humanitarian law obliges all parties, to any armed conflict, to allow and facilitate the rapid and unimpeded passage of humanitarian relief. We join with others in calling on all parties to conflict to ensure the freedom of movement of humanitarian personnel as is essential for the exercise of their vital, lifesaving functions.

Australia is deeply concerned about the increasing number of fatalities and incidents involving humanitarian personnel, and restrictions on humanitarian access. Calls for compliance with international humanitarian law are not being heard. The number of humanitarian personnel killed more than doubled between 2022 and 2023.

Australia believes the international community has a responsibility and a role to play in helping to push back against this concerning trend. Australia is pleased to endorse the Call for Action to Strengthen Respect for International Humanitarian Law and Principled Humanitarian Action (the **Call for Action**).

Australia notes that the Call for Action is voluntary, non-legally binding, and does not alter states' obligations under international law. We applaud its ambition to bolster respect for international humanitarian law as the most effective and appropriate framework to protect humanitarian personnel during times of armed conflict.

In endorsing the Call for Action, Australia wishes to affirm the following understandings.

With respect to the call to review national protection frameworks on domestic implementation of international humanitarian law obligations regularly to guarantee protection matching the highest standards observed in international practice, Australia understands this to refer to regular reviews to maintain consistency with existing standards, as set out in international humanitarian law.

With respect to ensuring that humanitarian and medical personnel are not prosecuted for activities conducted in accordance with international humanitarian law and the humanitarian principles, Australia construes this to refer to circumstances when these personnel are acting lawfully.

With respect to the call to support the provision of training to non-state armed groups on how to respect international humanitarian law and facilitate principled humanitarian action, Australia interprets this provision as calling for support, as appropriate, for international organisations and civil society to provide training to non-state armed groups, rather than providing direct or material support.

With respect to refraining from transfers of conventional arms, ammunition, parts, and components if the assessment concludes a clear risk that they could be used to commit or facilitate serious violations of international humanitarian law, Australia construes this to refer to existing commitments, including for States Parties to the *Arms Trade Treaty*.

Australia thanks France and Germany for their efforts in championing the Call for Action, and looks forward to working with states, international organisations and civil society to support and champion the protection of humanitarian personnel. Humanitarian personnel are dedicated to improving the lives of others. This should never cost them their own.