*As of 21 April 2025*

**Statement of the International Committee of the Red Cross**

**81st Session of the Commission**

**21 April 2025**

Excellencies, Distinguished Delegates,

The ICRC welcomes the opportunity to draw attention to two pressing humanitarian issues that are critical to achieving inclusive and sustainable development.

First, the urbanization of armed conflict. Cities—once symbols of progress—are increasingly becoming battlegrounds. When essential services collapse under the weight of warfare, civilians bear the brunt: hospitals shut down, essential services fail, and communities are uprooted. These are not just humanitarian crises—they are setbacks to recovery, stability, and long-term development.

Protecting civilians in armed conflict is not a choice—it is a legal obligation under international humanitarian law. We call on States to uphold this duty by safeguarding essential services, reinforcing critical infrastructure, and addressing the needs of displaced populations in urban settings. We further appeal States to endorse and faithfully implement commitment made under the Political Declaration on Explosive Weapons in Populated Areas.

Second, the military use of information and communication technologies in armed conflict poses urgent risks to civilians and protected objects. The ICRC has observed cyber and information operations targeting civilians, endangering lives and disrupting vital humanitarian services. We urge States to uphold IHL, ensuring the protection of civilians, critical infrastructure, medical and humanitarian personnel and facilities, and cultural property from the risks associated with ICT activities.

To support States in addressing these evolving challenges, the ICRC—together with six States—has launched the Global Initiative to Galvanize Political Commitment on IHL. This initiative aims to strengthen political commitment of States on IHL and generate practical guidance on key issues such as the use of ICTs in conflict and the protection of civilian infrastructure.

The leadership of Asia-Pacific States will be essential. We invite your engagement to help shape this Initiative and ensure it responds to today's most pressing humanitarian realities.

Thank you.