

<p>Side Event to the United Nations General Assembly 2021</p> <p>International Humanitarian Law – <i>Enhancing Monitoring, Improving Compliance</i></p>	<p>22/09/2021</p>
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European Commissioner for Crisis Management Janez Lenarčič

Opening Remarks (*timed up to 5 minutes*)

Thank you [name of person introducing the Commissioner]

Ambassadors,

Colleagues,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is an honour to co-chair this event, together with my dear colleagues from Germany and France.

The world is facing a dramatic surge in humanitarian needs, with the increasing number of conflicts being protracted.

Violations of IHL are now a recurrent phenomenon. In many conflicts, civilians, including humanitarian or health care workers, are deliberately targeted by belligerents. In many crises, aid agencies have to deal with administrative impediments and restrictions, deliberately in place to limit their access to people in need. Respect for IHL has never been at such a low point.

IHL violations devastate lives and destroy communities. Everywhere in the world. In the Sahel and northeast Nigeria, we continue to witness recurrent targeted attacks against civilian, medical and humanitarian personnel. In Ethiopia, the lives of millions of people hang in the balance as aid operators struggle to gain access to conflict-affected regions.

The European Union will remain a strong advocate for International Humanitarian Law.

We are strongly committed to put compliance with international humanitarian law (IHL) at the heart of our EU foreign policy to protect civilian populations, support principled humanitarian action and protect humanitarian and health care workers.

Advocacy remains the cornerstone of our efforts to address the challenges of IHL violations. We will continue to support the dissemination of IHL. And provide trainings in the field.

Going forward, we will use all of the EU's diplomatic, economic and security tools to support the laws of humanity. And adopt necessary measures to address confirmed violations where appropriate. IHL is not an option, IHL is an obligation.

We will also ensure that counterterrorism measures and sanctions do not hinder principled humanitarian actions. This has been a key part of the EU's focus over the past years.

I note, however, one challenge.

For our humanitarian efforts to succeed, for our words to count and be firm, we need to rely on key data and sound analysis on potential IHL violations. I am strongly convinced that we should improve the monitoring and reporting on those violations. This is a prerequisite for all the rest: reinforcing our international coordination, strengthening our compliance framework, adopting sanctions, etc. Monitoring and reporting is a sine qua none condition for increasing accountability as well as for raising the prominence of IHL in political-level discussions.

While initiatives exist to monitor incidents that could amount to violations of IHL, the available data and analysis is partial, scattered and lacks a global overview.

I believe that we need an initiative that can take us one step further.

An initiative that may bring together different existing data and give us an independent overview of all the sources that are available, legitimate methodology for data collection, a solid and inclusive network of organisations in the field and credible analysis of the information received. With a clear time frame and a moment where we are able to take a serious look at the issue of violations.

This is where I would like to see progress and where we are exploring what more could be done, bearing in mind, of course, the operational impact of such an initiative.

An independent **IHL monitoring mechanism or "observatory"** could enable us all to enhance compliance and increase accountability. And it will help us strengthen the basis for our joint advocacy efforts going forward, both in the community and on the global stage.

In this respect, the Humanitarian Call to Action, launched by Germany and France, represents an important initiative to build on, as it supports all efforts to collect, analyse and document

information about IHL violations. We also welcome the appointment of a Special Adviser on the preservation of humanitarian space and access. The EU looks forward to working together with OCHA on these issues.

Again, many thanks for joining this event today and for your support to our efforts. I look forward to hearing from our distinguished speakers and expert panellists.

With that, I now pass the floor over to my dear friend, Minister Jean-Yves Le Drian.

Thank you.