

World Humanitarian Summit

Roundtable: Uphold the Norms that Safeguard Humanity

Statement by

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Mr Chair

In the spirit of the message of President Maurer “people in war deserve nothing else but action” Austria aligns herself with all five core commitments and would like to make the following pledges in support of them. We have already submitted them in writing. Therefore I will limit myself highlighting their most important elements:

Core commitment 1:

We will engage in an intergovernmental process to find agreement on the functions and features of a potential forum of States on international humanitarian law and ways to enhance the implementation of international humanitarian law.

To promote the protection of civilians Austria commits to offer IHL and human rights law training sessions for foreign armed forces. In particular, Austria will continue to offer the Vienna Course on International Law for Military Legal Advisers, under the auspices of the European Security and Defence College.

Austria and the Austrian Red Cross will continue their excellent cooperation in organizing seminars disseminating IHL for professionals and volunteers in fields relevant to IHL, students as well as for journalists and for other opinion leaders.

Core commitment 2:

Given the horrendous and often long-lasting consequences for civilians as a result of the use of explosive weapons with wide area effects in populated areas Austria will raise international awareness, support the collection of data on direct civilian harm and the exchange of good practices and lessons as well as look for effective measures to strengthen the respect for international humanitarian law, including an international political declaration. So far this pledge is supported by Costa Rica, Ireland, Liechtenstein, Mexico, Mozambique and Spain.

We also made a pledge with regard to the humanitarian initiative for a world free of nuclear weapons. We would like to express our gratitude for the broad support received. We will strive towards the effective implementation and promote the ratification of and accession to the Arms Trade Treaty. We are supporting pledges with regard to the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention and the Convention on Cluster Munitions.

Core commitment 3:

Advocacy is often essential for both access and protection. Austria commits to use leverage and influence to prevent and end any arbitrary withholding of consent to impartial humanitarian relief. We will train armed forces to respect the obligation to allow and facilitate rapid and unimpeded passage of humanitarian relief.

We will also engage in the protection and safety of persons with disabilities in situations of risks.

Core commitment 4:

Austria will continue to train armed forces on the applicable legal framework for the protection of health care as well as ethical duties of health care personnel.

We commit to promote independent fact-finding concerning breaches of IHL, in particular with regard to attacks on health workers and health facilities.

Core commitment 5:

Austria will offer legal assistance to interested States in drafting national legislation encompassing the full range of international crimes and expanding jurisdiction over them.

Journalists play a crucial role as providers of information for the fight against impunity. Austria will promote the implementation of the United Nations Plan of Action on the Safety of Journalists and to work on monitoring compliance with international rules and standards to safeguard journalists, media professionals and associated personnel including in situations of conflict and emergencies and to join a global effort to end impunity for attacks against journalists.