

Speech by Edward Chia

General Debate – 151st Inter-Parliamentary Union Assembly (IPU)

Topic: Upholding and Advancing International Humanitarian Law

Madam President,

Excellencies,

Distinguished Delegates,

Singapore stands firmly committed to upholding and advancing

International Humanitarian Law, or IHL.

As a small nation, our security and prosperity depend on a **rules-based multilateral system**. We therefore have a deep stake in preserving respect for the **UN Charter and international law** — the foundation that safeguards the sovereignty and equality of all states.

Respect for international law, including IHL, has guided Singapore's foreign policy since independence. We acceded to the **Geneva Conventions in 1973**, just eight years after becoming a nation — reflecting our belief that the world must be **governed by rules, not by power**.

In **2023**, Singapore acceded to the **Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons**, which took effect in 2024 — reaffirming our

commitment to protecting civilians and reducing human suffering in conflict.

Beyond legal obligations, Singapore contributes actively to humanitarian causes. Since **2001**, we have made **annual voluntary contributions** to the **UN High Commissioner for Refugees** and other international organisations with humanitarian mandates.

As a small state, we take a **collaborative approach**, channelling support through **multilateral frameworks**, **regional relief efforts**, and partnerships with the **Singapore Red Cross** to deliver aid where it is most needed.

We value our strong partnership with the **International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC)**. Through global and regional IHL conferences, such as the **Asia-Pacific Regional Conference in Manila** and the **International Conference of the Red Cross and Red Crescent**, we share experiences and learn from others.

Within the **Singapore Armed Forces**, IHL principles are integrated into all levels of training and operations.

We also recognise that modern warfare and emerging technologies present new challenges for IHL. In **February 2025**, Singapore co-hosted **Asia-Pacific Regional Consultations** with the **UN Institute for Disarmament Research** on applying IHL to **lethal autonomous weapons**. We also took part in the **Asia-Pacific Symposium on IHL and New Technologies of Warfare** in **June 2025**.

As **artificial intelligence, autonomy, and cyber operations** become more widespread, IHL must continue to evolve — remaining relevant, responsive, and rooted in its humanitarian purpose. Singapore will continue to play an active role in advancing dialogue and consensus in these emerging areas.

Madam President,

Singapore consistently calls on all parties in conflict to **uphold international law and IHL**. Civilians and civilian infrastructure — especially **hospitals and medical personnel** — must be protected. The principles of **distinction, proportionality, and necessity** are moral imperatives that preserve our shared humanity in war.

In closing,

I thank all delegates who have worked tirelessly to foster dialogue and

understanding. **Respectful engagement builds trust — and trust sustains progress.**

Let us reaffirm what unites us, and return home as advocates for **humanity, compassion, and the rule of law.**

Thank you.