42nd ROUND TABLE ON CURRENT ISSUES OF INTERNATIONAL HUMANITARIAN LAW
ON THE 70th ANNIVERSARY OF THE GENEVA CONVENTIONS

“Whither the human in armed conflict? IHL implications of new technology in warfare”

Sanremo, 4-6 September 2019

Opening remarks

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It is an honor for me to deliver some remarks today on behalf of the Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation. I would like to thank the promoters of this event for having once again, this year, gathered such an influential group of experts to discuss issues of exceptional relevance and interest that require further attention, notably the new challenges and developments in the field of International Humanitarian Law.

The respect of International Humanitarian Law is not only a legal obligation but also a moral imperative: promoting its widest application is crucial in order to ensure that the principles of humanity and dignity of every human being, especially those belonging to vulnerable groups, are always protected even in situations of conflict. Italy continues therefore to be at the forefront in the defense and promotion of International Humanitarian Law, particularly to guarantee the highest protection for civilians during today’s armed conflicts.

This round-table meeting is an important opportunity to draw the attention on these matters and to strengthen our commitment for International Humanitarian Law, which is currently facing new and complex challenges, in particular due to the continuous development of technologies.
I find it particularly relevant and timely that this round-table is focused on the implications posed by the design and deployment of Artificial Intelligence applications and autonomous weapon systems in military operations, as well as on the concerns raised by the growing offensive capacities developed in the field of cyber and space domains. We need indeed to increase our collective understanding in this complex topic of emerging technologies, and their possible military use, in order to avoid a scenario whereby rapid advances outpace our ability to maintain human control on crucial functions of weapon systems, and ultimately our ability to uphold International Humanitarian Law.

I would like to express my profound appreciation for the activities carried out by the International Institute of Humanitarian Law in Sanremo that since its establishment in 1970 has played a crucial role in promoting International Humanitarian Law, representing a real "centre of excellence" at international level. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation has a longstanding cooperation with the Institute of Sanremo. We are committed to supporting and promoting the activities of the Institute, in particular the specific training on international humanitarian law carried out in favor of members of the armed forces of many countries.

I hope you have a good and fruitful work these days.