

The ICRC Work of the Protection of the Natural Environment in Times of Armed Conflicts

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Outline

1. IHL and the Protection of the Natural Environment
2. Armed Conflicts and Climate Change
3. Environmental footprint of humanitarian action



1. IHL and the Protection of the Natural Environment

- ▶ General IHL provisions: mainly on conduct of hostilities
- ▶ Specific IHL rules for the protection of the environment: for International armed conflict – no specific requirement for Non-international armed conflicts
- ▶ Customary rules: important but some persistent objections from some States



ICRC work on protection of the natural environment

- ▶ 1994: ICRC Guidelines for Military Manuals and Instructions on the Protection of the Environment in Times of Armed Conflicts.
- ▶ Since then many conflicts and also the Customary IHL study
- ▶ 2019: Revised ICRC Guidelines on the Protection of the Natural Environment in Situations of Armed Conflicts



Revised ICRC Guidelines on the Protection of the Natural Environment in Situations of Armed Conflicts (I)

- ▶ For States and non-States
- ▶ Interaction between IHL and other bodies of International Law
- ▶ Current State of IHL – no new obligations
- ▶ Concise commentary for each guideline



Revised ICRC Guidelines on the Protection of the Natural Environment in Situations of Armed Conflicts (II)

4 parts:

1. Specific protection afforded by IHL
2. General IHL rules relevant for the protection of the environment
3. Rules on certain weapons relevant for the protection of the environment
4. Respect, implementation, dissemination



Revised ICRC Guidelines on the Protection of the Natural Environment in Situations of Armed Conflicts (III)

Key recommendations

- The natural environment is civilian in character (unless specific components have become military objectives). As a result, all the general IHL rules that protect civilian objects must be applied to it
- There are also specific IHL rules that must be applied to protect the natural environment in armed conflict

- Will be published in the course of 2019



2. Armed Conflicts and Climate Change

- Climate change severely affects people's lives
- A “threat multiplier”
- A “vulnerability multiplier”



3. Environmental footprint of humanitarian action

- “Greening the ICRC”
- Helping communities to cope with climate change consequences



Concluding remarks

- A common responsibility
- A common goal
- Parallel actions
- “Not a luxury anymore”

