



**COUNCIL OF
THE EUROPEAN UNION**



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**Declaration by the Presidency on behalf of the European Union
on the Occasion of the 60th Anniversary of the adoption of the
four Geneva Conventions of 1949**

On the occasion of the 60th anniversary of the adoption of the four Geneva Conventions for the protection of those who do not, or no longer, take part in hostilities, the European Union reiterates the importance that it attaches to the Geneva Conventions, which are at the heart of international humanitarian law.

The adoption of these core treaties 60 years ago still stands out as a significant accomplishment. The EU welcomes the universal acceptance of the Geneva Conventions of 1949 which all EU Member States have ratified. The EU also welcomes the clear trend towards a similarly wide acceptance of the two Additional Protocols of 1977 as well as the adoption of a third Additional Protocol in 2005.

P R E S S

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Despite the universal acceptance of the norms underlying these instruments, civilians continue to bear the brunt of the consequences of armed conflicts. The need to ensure respect for the law is more important than ever. This requires continuous efforts to mobilise political will, increase awareness of international humanitarian law, and ensure accountability for violations, in particular for acts that amount to war crimes.

The European Union is founded on the principles of liberty, democracy, respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms and the rule of law. This includes the goal of promoting compliance with international humanitarian law. To this end, the EU adopted Guidelines on International Humanitarian law in December 2005, which set out operational tools for the EU to promote compliance with international humanitarian law among third states and non-state actors.

This year, we also mark the 150th Anniversary of the Battle of Solferino, the terrible battle that led to the founding of the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement, the world's largest humanitarian organization. The European Union pledges its continuing support to the International Committee of the Red Cross. The Union also appreciates the special responsibilities of National Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies as auxiliaries to the public authorities to cooperate with and assist their Governments in the promotion, dissemination and implementation of international humanitarian law.

International law, including international humanitarian law, is one of the strongest tools the international community has to maintain international order and to ensure the protection and dignity of all persons. The European Union will continue to do its utmost to promote an international order where no state or individual is above the law and no one is outside the protection of the law.

The Candidate Country Croatia* and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia*, the Countries of the Stabilisation and Association Process and potential candidates Albania, Montenegro, Serbia, and the EFTA countries Liechtenstein and Norway, members of the European Economic Area, as well as Ukraine, the Republic of Moldova, Armenia and Georgia align themselves with this declaration.

* Croatia and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia continue to be part of the Stabilisation and Association Process."