

The Belgian Interdepartmental Commission for Humanitarian Law

by Marc Offermans

The Belgian Interdepartmental Commission for Humanitarian Law (ICHL) was established by a decision of the Council of Ministers on 20 February 1987. Its main task consists in studying national measures to implement the Protocols additional to the Geneva Conventions, and, if need be, the Conventions themselves.

After more than three years of ICHL activities, it seems appropriate to publish a paper on this Commission, which owes its existence largely to a Belgian Red Cross initiative.

After some general reflections on the implementation of international humanitarian law, this article describes the origins, the establishment, the composition, the tasks, the working methods and the working procedure of the ICHL.

It concludes with a brief survey of the Commission's activities from the date of its establishment up to the end of 1990.

Implementation of international humanitarian law

Ratification of or accession to the four Geneva Conventions of 12 August 1949 and of their two Additional Protocols, adopted on 8 June 1977, implies for the States party a commitment to respect and to ensure respect for these international instruments in all circumstances.

In order to ensure the faithful application of humanitarian law in the event of armed conflict, the States must, already in peacetime, take a number of internal measures. These measures may be of a legislative, statutory, administrative or practical nature.¹

¹ On the implementation of international humanitarian law in Belgium, see

On several occasions the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) has reminded the States of the importance of implementing international humanitarian law. It has drawn up an indicative list of national measures, to be taken in peacetime, to implement the Geneva Conventions and their Additional Protocols.² Among the Resolutions of the XXVth International Conference of the Red Cross was Resolution V, entitled “National measures to implement international humanitarian law”.³

Origins of the ICHL

The Protocols additional to the Geneva Conventions of 12 August 1949, adopted in Geneva on 8 June 1977, were approved by Belgium in an Act of 16 April 1986⁴ and entered into force on 20 November 1986, the instruments of ratification having been deposited with the Swiss Federal Council in Bern on 20 May of the same year.

A. Andries, “The implementation of the Additional Protocols in Belgium”, *International Review of the Red Cross (IRRC)*, No. 258, May-June 1987, pp. 272-276. See also the Belgian report drafted in answer to the questionnaire on the “Implementation of international humanitarian law at the national level, with special reference to developments of modern warfare”, at the XIth International Congress of the International Society for Military Law and the Law of War, held in Edinburgh, from 19 to 23 September 1988; this report was published in *The Military Law and Law of War Review*, 1989, pp. 91-121, and in the *Recueils de la Société internationale de droit militaire et de droit de la guerre*, XI (1), Brussels, 1989, pp. 91-121. See also the unpublished report by L. De Wever, “Preliminary report by the Belgian Red Cross on the role of a National Society in the adoption of legislative and administrative procedures for the implementation of the Geneva Conventions and their Additional Protocols in time of peace”; this report was presented in Geneva on 22 October 1989 during a day of study on international humanitarian law.

² This list, which is preceded by an introduction, is published in the *IRRC*, No. 263, March-April 1988, pp. 130-139, under the title “Respect for international humanitarian law. National measures to implement the Geneva Conventions and their Additional Protocols in peacetime”.

³ This Resolution, adopted in Geneva on 31 October 1986, is published in the *IRRC*, No. 255, November-December 1986, pp. 346-347 and No. 263, March-April 1988, p. 127.

⁴ The Act of 16 April 1986 approving the following international treaties: the Protocol additional to the Geneva Conventions of 12 August 1949, and relating to the protection of victims of international armed conflicts (Protocol I) and the Protocol additional to the Geneva Conventions of 12 August 1949, and relating to the protection of victims of non-international armed conflicts (Protocol II), adopted in Geneva on 8 June 1977 (*Moniteur belge* of 7 November 1986 and of 22 November 1986). The latter contains the Belgian interpretative declarations relating to Protocol I. The four Geneva Conventions had been approved long before, by Act of 3 September 1952 (*Moniteur belge* of 26 September 1952). The texts of the Geneva Conventions and the Additional Protocols are published in the *Moniteur belge*, in French and in Dutch.

Shortly afterwards, on 27 and 28 November 1986, the Belgian Red Cross organized a Symposium on the implementation of these new rules of international humanitarian law.⁵ The proceedings of the Symposium have since been published.⁶

The three specialized commissions set up during this Symposium each examined one of the following themes: the repression of grave breaches of the Geneva Conventions and their Additional Protocols, the appointment of legal advisers in the Armed Forces and the dissemination of international humanitarian law.

In the addresses given during the Symposium, especially the speeches by the then President of the ICRC, Mr. A. Hay,⁷ and the Belgian Prime Minister, Mr. W. Martens,⁸ it was stressed on the one hand that the implementation of international humanitarian law is an essential corollary to ratification of the texts and, on the other hand, that implementation might not be properly assured unless there is co-ordination within a permanent body. This may be an existing body or one to be set up, bringing together in a manner yet to be determined the Government departments and the non-governmental bodies concerned, especially the National Red Cross Society.

Establishment of the ICHL

One of the major results of the November 1986 Symposium was the fact that on 12 February 1987 the Prime Minister addressed a note to the Council of Ministers in the following terms:

⁵ Reports on this Symposium may be found in the following works: A. Andries, "Le symposium de la Croix-Rouge sur les récents développements du droit humanitaire", *Journal des tribunaux*, 1986, p. 733; A. Andries, "The implementation...", *op. cit.*, note 1 above, pp. 275-276; C. Vandekerckhove, "Dissemination of international humanitarian law. The Belgian situation", *IRRC*, No. 258, May-June 1987, p. 278; G. Hullebroeck, "The dissemination of humanitarian law. One of our major concerns", *IRRC*, No. 263, March-April 1988, p. 178; L. De Wever, "Rodekruissymposium over tenuitvoerlegging van de Aanvullende Protokollen bij de Conventies van Genève", *Universeel. Tweemaandelijks tijdschrift van het Belgische Rode Kruis in Vlaanderen*, 1987, No. 1, pp. 12-14 and No. 2, pp. 90-92.

⁶ These proceedings are published in *The Military Law and Law of War Review*, 1988, pp. 195-366. A report on this publication appears in A. Andries and F. Gorlé, "Chronique annuelle de droit pénal militaire (1988-1989)", *Revue de droit pénal et de criminologie*, 1989, pp. 964-965 and F. Gorlé and A. Andries, "Kroniek van militair strafrecht (1988-1989)", *Rechtskundig Weekblad*, 1989-1990, p. 658.

⁷ The ICRC President's speech is published in *The Military Law... Review*, *op. cit.*, note 6 above, pp. 205-209.

⁸ The Prime Minister's speech is published in the same *Review*, pp. 219-224.

"As our country has now ratified these important humanitarian treaties,⁹ we should promptly consider which implementation measures should be taken. It seems advisable to set up an interdepartmental commission which would be entrusted with drawing up an inventory of the measures to be taken, and with following up and co-ordinating the texts required by the competent Ministries. This commission could be chaired by the President of the Commission for National Defence Problems (CPND) and could also comprise representatives of the Prime Minister, the Ministers of Justice, the Budget, External Relations,¹⁰ the Interior, Social Affairs and National Defence, and of the Secretary of State for Public Health".

At its meeting of 20 February 1987, the Council of Ministers approved the proposal put forward in the note of 12 February 1987. Thus the ICHL was created.¹¹

⁹ That is, the Protocols additional to the Geneva Conventions.

¹⁰ Currently Foreign Affairs.

¹¹ The ICHL is mentioned in the following publications: A. Andries, "The implementation...", *op. cit.*, note 1 above, p. 281; A. Andries, "The international challenges facing humanitarian law today, 125 years after its creation", *IRRC*, No. 273, November-December 1989, pp. 561-562; C. Vandekerckhove, "Dissemination of international humanitarian law...", *op. cit.*, note 5 above, p. 281; M. Offermans, "La Commission interdépartementale de droit humanitaire (CIDH)", *More. Bulletin d'information pour le personnel de l'Administration générale civile du ministère de la défense nationale*, 1990, No. 1, pp. 21-25; A. Andries and F. Gorlé, "Chronique annuelle de droit pénal militaire (1986-1987)", *Revue de droit pénal et de criminologie*, 1987, p. 938; F. Gorlé and A. Andries, "Kroniek van militair strafrecht (1986-1987)", *Rechtskundig Weekblad*, 1987-1988, p. 481; R. Bats, Introduction to the report on the proceedings of the Symposium of 27 and 28 November 1986 devoted to the implementation of the Protocols additional to the Geneva Conventions of 12 August 1949, *The Military Law and Law of War Review*, 1988, pp. 197-199; L. De Wever, "Een verjaardag in het teken van een humanitair gebaar. 8 mei 1989. De Belgische Regering en de Gemeenschappen engageren zich voor het humanitair recht", *Universeel, Tweemaandelijks tijdschrift van het Belgische Rode Kruis in Vlaanderen*, 1989, No. 4, p. 166; L. De Wever, *Het Rode Kruis en de verspreiding van het internationaal humanitair recht*, 8-page brochure published by the Belgian Red Cross, Flemish Community, December 1989, p. 7; R. Remacle, "Conseillers en droit humanitaire", *Contact (Institut royal supérieur de défense)*, 1988, p. 107; R. Bats, paper presented at the XIth International Congress of the International Society for Military Law and the Law of War, Edinburgh, 19-23 September 1988, devoted to the implementation of international humanitarian law at the national level, *The Military Law and Law of War Review*, 1989, pp. 363-365 and *Recueils de la Société internationale de droit militaire et de droit de la guerre*, XI (1), Brussels, 1989, pp. 363-365; Belgian report drafted in answer to the questionnaire on the implementation of international humanitarian law, during the same Congress, *idem*, p. 94. Moreover, a brief review of the first two years of the ICHL is given in the unpublished speech by the former ICHL president, R. Bats, under the title "La mise en œuvre du droit humanitaire en Belgique", at the Forum on international humanitarian law organized by the Belgian Red Cross on 8 May 1989 (see note 19 below).

Composition of the ICHL

Representatives of the Ministers and the Secretary of State

In accordance with the decision of the Council of Ministers which set up the ICHL, the latter consists of representatives of the Prime Minister, the Ministers of Justice, the Budget, External Relations,¹² the Interior, Social Affairs and National Defence, and of the Secretary of State for Public Health. These representatives, together with their deputies, may be members of the Ministers' or Secretary of State's staff or civil servants — or even officers, in the case of National Defence — of the Ministry concerned.

Representatives of the Red Cross

Representatives of both Communities of the Belgian Red Cross who are specialized in international humanitarian law are also actively involved in the ICHL activities. In fact, at its first meeting on 12 May 1987, the ICHL urged the Belgian Red Cross to participate in the Commission's activities.

Experts

The Commission also includes several experts appointed by some of the Ministers represented on the ICHL. This applies to the Ministry of Justice and the Ministry of National Defence. The majority of these experts are military magistrates specializing in international humanitarian law.

Chairman

Pursuant to the decision of the Council of Ministers which set up the ICHL, the latter is chaired by the President of the Commission for National Defence Problems (CPND).

The chair was first held by Major General (currently Lieutenant General) A. Everaert, until July 1987, and then by Major General R. Bats, from September 1987 until the end of September 1989. It is currently chaired by Major General G. Van Lancker.

¹² Currently Foreign Affairs.

Secretary

In accordance with the ICHL's internal regulations, the Commission's Secretary is appointed by the Commission itself, on the proposal of its Chairman. At the moment the Secretary is the legal adviser of the CPND, the author of the present study.

Extension of the ICHL

From the ICHL's first meeting it became evident that apart from the Ministries initially represented there were others equally interested in some of the measures of implementation, for instance both Ministries of Education and the Ministries of the Communities and the Regions.

National Education

It appeared very soon that among the various measures of implementation the dissemination of international humanitarian law was a top priority and that education thus had a major role to play.

The Ministers of Education — at that time National Education, and currently the Community Executive members who are in charge of educational issues — have been represented on the Commission since June 1987.

Communities and Regions

Several years ago Belgium became a federal State consisting of three Communities and three Regions.

On various occasions at the ICHL's meetings, reference has been made to the participation of the Communities and the Regions in the Commission's activities and even to an extension of the latter to the advantage of these public law entities. Now that education has come within the competence of the Communities, it has become even more imperative to settle the matter of official participation of the Communities in the ICHL's activities. But this also holds true for various aspects of public health, the protection of cultural property and the dissemination of humanitarian law.

This issue was submitted to the Prime Minister on 19 December 1988 and has been raised on several occasions since then. The political authorities concerned have not taken any fundamental decision in the matter so far.

The ICHL's terms of reference

According to the decision of the Council of Ministers which set up the ICHL, the latter's task consists in "drawing up a complete inventory of the measures to be taken" and in "following up and co-ordinating the finalization of the texts required by the competent Ministries".

In practice, the ICHL's activities mainly consist in examining the Additional Protocols (and, if need be, the Geneva Conventions), in determining the measures to be taken at national level with a view to the implementation of these texts and, finally, in making proposals to the political and administrative authorities involved in the implementation of international humanitarian law.

The implementation of this law is therefore incumbent on these political and administrative authorities. As for the ICHL itself, it does not have any executive power. It confines itself to co-ordinating and occasionally stimulating the action of the various Ministries concerned and to making appropriate proposals. It is also entrusted with following up the measures of implementation decided upon by competent authorities.

The ICHL's working methods

In order to discharge its mandate, the ICHL has drawn up a "table of measures to be taken". This table, modelled on the indicative list drawn up by the ICRC, sets out, in forty-two items, the provisions of the Additional Protocols — accompanied where necessary by the provisions of the Geneva Conventions — which require measures of implementation. A distinction has been made between the provisions calling for priority measures of implementation and those for which measures are to be studied with a view to progressive implementation. For each area requiring measures of implementation, the relevant ministerial departments have been identified, among them the "pilot" department. The latter is entrusted with formulating proposals for legal or practical measures which must be taken at national level. To this end, it convenes the representatives of the various departments concerned and, when appropriate, experts and other specialists to be consulted. A working document is drawn up and submitted to the ICHL for consideration, discussion and approval. On the basis of this approved working document, measures of implementation are proposed to the authorities concerned. The approved working document is regularly

updated. The “table of measures to be taken” lists these working documents either as drafts or as approved by the ICHL.

The layout and numbering of these working documents correspond to a model annexed to the ICHL’s internal regulations. For each measure, the relevant working document specifies its content, its legal basis and the departments concerned. It then analyses the probable budgetary implications, the stage reached in the matter and the proposals for decision.

The ICHL’s working procedure

The Commission drew up its own internal regulations, which were approved at its 16 June 1987 meeting. New regulations were adopted on 29 May 1990; they came into force on 1 June 1990. A description of the Commission’s working methods has been attached to them.

In order to facilitate the Commission’s work, the Belgian Red Cross has offered to co-operate and has made its premises available for the Commission’s meetings. The Red Cross is entrusted with keeping the minutes of the Commission’s plenary sessions.

Each year the ICHL draws up a report on its activities which is sent to the members of the Government and to the Community Executives represented on the Commission.

The ICHL’s headquarters are at the Egmont Palace in Brussels, in the premises of the CPND. Its meetings, however, are held at the Belgian Red Cross headquarters once a month. The Commission’s first meeting took place on 12 May 1987. Between that date and the end of 1990, the Commission met thirty-three times.

Brief review of the ICHL’s activities ¹³

Qualified personnel

One of the first measures for implementation of international humanitarian law studied by the ICHL was the appointment of qualified personnel, as recommended in Article 6 of Additional Protocol I.

¹³ Only a summary of ICHL activities is given here. We are, however, preparing a detailed account of the Commission’s work.

Among such qualified personnel are the Ministers' representatives within the ICHL, together with the experts participating in the Commission's work. The legal advisers in the armed forces, referred to below, can also be considered as qualified personnel. The ICHL has also contacted the academic staff of the Belgian universities in order to establish a provisional list of qualified personnel, i.e., university professors who are specialists in international humanitarian law. On 18 May 1988 this list was sent to the ICRC through diplomatic channels.

Those appearing on the list of qualified personnel are regularly invited to activities (conferences, debates, courses, etc.) organized by the Belgian Red Cross, as well as to some ICHL meetings.

Legal advisers in the armed forces

Another measure of primary importance which has been examined by the ICHL is the implementation of Article 82 of Additional Protocol I relating to legal advisers in the armed forces.

The implementation of this provision involves the setting up, in peacetime, of a body of legal advisers, in determining their competences and in arranging for their training. This issue was on the agenda of the Symposium held by the Belgian Red Cross in November 1986.¹⁴

The proposals made in this respect by the general staff of the armed forces to the Minister of National Defence were approved by the latter on 18 September 1987. After a transitional period of about two years from 1 October 1987,¹⁵ the system was instituted early in 1990.

A "law of war" section has been set up at the general staff headquarters. Advisers — known as "advisers in the law of war" — are to be attached to the general staff of the three Armed Forces, the medical service and large units. They are regular and reserve officers of the "operations" section. These officers are therefore fully integrated into the general staff and can advise commanders in the application of the law of war, the planning and conduct of operations and the dissemination of international humanitarian law.

¹⁴ An introductory report by G. Van Gerven and a report on activities in this field by J. F. Elens are published in *The Military Law and Law of War Review*, 1988, pp. 247-293 and 347-353 respectively.

¹⁵ For this matter, see R. Remacle, *op. cit.*, note 11 above, pp. 105-124, and the Belgian report drafted in answer to the questionnaire on the implementation of international humanitarian law, at the XIth International Congress of the International Society for Military Law and the Law of War, *op. cit.*, note 1 above, pp. 99-100.

In order to train the advisers, a special course on the law of war has been organized at the Royal Defence College every year since 1988.

Moreover, information sessions and a course on the law of war are planned at all levels of the military hierarchy (officers, non-commissioned officers, soldiers) and throughout the servicemen's military career, in the form of both basic education and in-service training. To this end, appropriate teaching aids have been developed.

Repression of grave breaches

One of the priority measures of implementation examined by the ICHL pertains to the repression of grave breaches of international humanitarian law.

As early as 1963 the Belgian Government submitted a bill to Parliament concerning the repression of grave breaches of the Geneva Conventions.

Subsequently, in view of the imminent adoption of the Additional Protocols, the first of which adds to the list of grave breaches, the Government decided to suspend the parliamentary procedure related to that bill.¹⁶

In 1981, a bill inspired by the 1963 bill but tailored to the new provisions of Additional Protocol I was drafted by a working group set up on the initiative of the Seminar on military penal law and the law of war. This new text was handed over to the Minister of Justice in 1982.¹⁷

At the November 1986 Symposium, the work of one of the commissions focused on the repression of grave breaches.¹⁸

Since its inception in 1987, the ICHL has ceaselessly endeavoured to persuade the Government to submit a new bill in this matter.

The repression of grave breaches was again put on the agenda of the Forum on international humanitarian law organized by the Belgian Red Cross on 8 May 1989.¹⁹ On that occasion, the Minister of Justice, Mr.

¹⁶ On this matter, see A. Andries, "The implementation...", *op. cit.*, note 1 above, pp. 272-273; J. Verhaegen, "Le vote du projet de loi belge No. 577 (1962-1963), un enjeu international", *Journal des tribunaux*, 1982, pp. 226-230.

¹⁷ See A. Andries, "Chronique annuelle de droit pénal militaire (1982)", *Revue de droit pénal et de criminologie*, 1983, pp. 906-908.

¹⁸ An introductory report by J. Verhaegen and a report on activities in this field by A. Andries are published in *The Military Law and Law of War Review*, 1988, pp. 227-238 and 329-341 respectively.

¹⁹ See L. De Wever, "Een verjaardag...", *op. cit.*, note 11 above, p. 167; M. Orienne, "Célébrer le 8 mai par un geste humanitaire", *Contact (Croix-Rouge de Belgique, Communauté francophone)*, 1989, No. 3, p. 4; A. Andries and F. Gorlé, "Chronique... (1988-1989)", *op. cit.*, note 6 above, pp. 961-962; F. Gorlé and A.

M. Wathelet, took the floor and stated that he would very shortly submit a new draft bill to the Council of Ministers. On 30 June 1989, this text was submitted to the Council of Ministers, which approved it. The draft bill was sent to the Council of State for its advice on 6 July 1989. The bill can be submitted to Parliament only after the Council of State has given its advice.

International Fact-Finding Commission

The Act of 16 April 1986 approving the Additional Protocols contained a provision whereby the King was entitled to subscribe to a statement acknowledging, on behalf of the Kingdom of Belgium, the competence of the International Fact-Finding Commission provided for in Article 90 of Additional Protocol I.

On 27 March 1987 the depositary State received Belgium's declaration of acceptance of the Commission's competence. Belgium was the eighth State to make this declaration. The ICHL has started examining the measures of implementation (mainly of a financial, administrative and even legislative nature) resulting therefrom.

Dissemination of international humanitarian law

The dissemination of international humanitarian law is one of the most important prerequisites for the actual application of the law and, consequently, for the protection of the victims of armed conflict. Dissemination, which should be carried out already in peacetime, represents the keystone of measures of implementation.²⁰

Back in November 1986, at the Symposium organized by the Belgian Red Cross, one of the topics discussed was dissemination.²¹ It was also on the agenda of the Forum on international humanitarian law of 8 May 1989.²² The ICHL has listed dissemination among the measures of implementation to be considered as a priority.²³ It has

Andries, "Kroniek... (1988-1989)", *op. cit.*, note 11 above, p. 657.

²⁰ See in particular, apart from the relevant provisions of the Conventions and the Additional Protocols, Resolution 21 of the Diplomatic Conference that adopted the Additional Protocols. See also Resolution IV of the XXVth International Conference of the Red Cross, adopted in Geneva on 31 October 1986. This Resolution is published in the *IRRC*, No. 225, November-December 1986, pp. 344-346.

²¹ The introductory report by G. Genot and the report on the activities in this field by M. Van Coppenolle are published in *The Military Law and Law of War Review*, 1988, pp. 303-322 and 359-363 respectively

²² See L. De Wever, "Een verjaardag...", *op. cit.*, note 11 above, pp. 167-169; M. Orienne, «Célébrer le 8 mai...», *op. cit.*, note 19 above, p. 4.

²³ On dissemination in Belgium, see in particular C. Vandekerckhove,

identified the various target groups, the corresponding levels of knowledge required and methods and means of dissemination. These measures of implementation should be considered in conjunction with the incorporation of advisers on the law of war in the armed forces and the appointment of qualified personnel.

As concerns dissemination within the armed forces, this measure is largely covered by the steps taken to appoint advisers on the law of war, who are responsible for education and dissemination within the Armed Forces. With regard to dissemination in the civil service, initiatives have been taken in several Ministries to allow civil servants and members of related bodies (magistrates, diplomats) to attend courses on humanitarian law organized by the armed forces or by the Belgian Red Cross.

Dissemination in the medical, paramedical and nursing professions is still under consideration, as it is in the educational sector, which now falls within the competence of the Communities.

Dissemination of international humanitarian law is undoubtedly the responsibility of the States party to the relevant treaties, in this case the Belgian State. However, taking into account the experience of the Belgian Red Cross in that area, the ICHL feels that dissemination among the general public could be carried out by the authorities in co-operation with the National Red Cross Society.

A proposal has been made to set up a permanent dissemination unit at the Belgian Red Cross, to operate under the supervision of the ICHL. The unit's main tasks could be to define needs in the field of dissemination, to plan information programmes and to implement the projects accepted.

Such activities, however, would entail an agreement between the Belgian Government and the National Red Cross Society on their respective roles, the terms of their co-operation and how the necessary financial resources are to be made available.

Other measures

Among the other measures to implement international humanitarian law examined by the ICHL, special mention should be made of steps to ensure the compliance of new weapons (Article 36 of Additional Protocol I); the definition of members of the armed forces (Article 43);

"Dissemination of international humanitarian law..."; *op. cit.*, note 5 above, pp. 277-281; G. Hullebroeck, "The dissemination...", *op. cit.*, note 5 above, pp. 178-181; E. David, "Dissemination of international humanitarian law at university level", *IRRC*, No. 257, March-April 1987, pp. 155-167; L. De Wever, *Het Rode Kruis...*, *op. cit.*, note 11 above, pp. 5-8.

determination of the status of persons who have taken part in hostilities (Article 45); the protection of cultural objects and places of worship (Article 53);²⁴ the duties of military commanders (Article 87); the repression of breaches which are not qualified as grave and of breaches resulting from a failure to act (Article 86); measures indispensable for the application of the Third Geneva Convention relating to the treatment of prisoners of war; the setting up of a National Information Bureau as provided for in the Third and Fourth Geneva Conventions.

Final remarks

After more than three years of work, the ICHL has achieved very positive results. This interdepartmental body set up in 1987 to examine measures of implementation of international humanitarian law has proved to be an ideal forum for a co-ordinated examination of such measures. The participation of the Belgian Red Cross in ICHL activities is undoubtedly a great asset.

Although Belgium has, thanks to these initiatives, come to be regarded as a "pilot State" in the field of implementation, much remains to be done. Indeed, the progress of the Commission's work depends to a large extent on the support of each of the participating Ministries. Moreover, it often depends on decisions the competent authorities have to take. But there can be no doubt that the Commission's efforts will very soon bear fruit.

Marc Offermans

Marc Offermans, a former lecturer at the Catholic University of Louvain, is currently legal adviser of the Commission for National Defence Problems (CPND), on which he represents the Ministry of National Defence. He is also the Secretary of the Interdepartmental Commission for Humanitarian Law (ICHL) and a professor at the Military Administrators' Academy.

²⁴ In this connection the ICHL also examined the measures of implementation that are required by the Convention for the Protection of Cultural Property in the Event of Armed Conflict, adopted in The Hague on 14 May 1954 and approved in Belgium by Act of 10 August 1960 (*Moniteur belge* of 16-17 November 1960).