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31st International Conference of the Red Cross Red Crescent
Geneva, 28 November–1 December 2011– For humanity



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Progress in strengthening disaster response laws

Several key conference goals regarding the enhancement of laws facilitating disaster preparedness and response were met during one of yesterday's plenary sessions. One key development was the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding between the IFRC and the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs to cooperate to strengthen disaster laws, rules and principles. Just as noteworthy were statements from numerous countries that have significantly improved their own national disaster legislation. "This means we are in a position to respond better and we have more resilient and better-prepared communities," said Alicia Arango, the permanent representative of Colombia to the United Nations. "We need to be sure that we are also better coordinated locally and internationally."

How do you restore the hope of a generation?

This was one of the questions raised in the workshop on "Best practices in strengthening child protection", led by a panel of experts from the National Societies of Denmark, Honduras, Palestine and Uganda. In an effort to share best practices and strengthen an exchange between Movement partners, panelists and participants highlighted successful work with young people in conflict-affected areas that focuses on psychosocial support and efforts to build a culture of peace and social inclusion. One of the key points of consensus was that the Movement has an existing expertise that should be strengthened. In the words of the Danish Red Cross youth representative: "Not addressing it can jeopardize the transition from war to peace. We're in a position to advocate and should take it on as a key responsibility."

Video games and IHL: an opportunity to promote the laws of armed conflict?

The ever-increasing popularity of video games that simulate war-like situations represents a new reality for the ICRC, which devotes considerable resources every year to promoting the laws of armed conflict in schools, universities and military organizations. During the side event, the ICRC invited Movement partners to reflect on what place (if any) rules have in virtual battlefields, whether in games or in simulators used for the training of armed forces. National Societies and government representatives were asked to share experiences gained in any interactions they may have had with the game industry, and to give their opinion on the best way to approach game developers and publishers. Participants confirmed the relevance of the issue and highlighted the opportunities rather than the challenges that video games represent. More information: <http://www.icrc.org/eng/resources/documents/faq/ihl-video-games-faq-2011-12-08.htm>

In support of a greener conference, the Daily Bulletin has been reduced to two pages, with fewer photos to reduce paper and ink consumption. To supplement this and the Video Daily Bulletin, photo galleries and additional information are available on the conference websites.

President Konoé joins chorus in singing for peace

Hundreds of delegates attended a performance by the Roppongi Men's Chorus Club on Tuesday evening at the Victoria Hall. The 120 member choir presented a libretto called *The Last Message* consisting of excerpts from the last remaining letters and notes written by soldiers and other victims of the Second World War. The performance was given as an expression of thanks for the assistance provided to Japan following this year's devastating earthquake and tsunami. One enthusiastic attendee described the performance as: "an extraordinary musical experience. Despite its moving content which left not one heart untouched, *The Last Message* conveyed a message of peace, humanity, hope and love."

PRCS and MDA: Reinforcing cooperation

A further step towards complete implementation of the 2005 Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) between the Palestine Red Crescent Society and Magen David Adom in Israel was achieved through the adoption of a resolution outlining the way forward. The independent monitor of the implementation process, Pär Stenbäck, once again noted the goodwill on all sides to see the implementation through to its end. He stated the hope that the resolution and complete implementation of the MoU would help shape a positive humanitarian environment, facilitating the work of all involved and ultimately benefiting affected populations.

The Fundamental Principles bring us together from afar

Just before Niki Rattle left the Cook Islands to come to Geneva to chair the 31st International Conference, her National Society opened its first ever headquarters: a cyclone-proof structure that can house up to 80 people in the event of a severe storm. Now boasting 16 staffers and 300 volunteers, the Cook Islands Red Cross serves roughly 13,000 people over 15 small islands. "Our Fundamental Principles are what bring us all together," says Rattle, who began as a nurse volunteer in 1993 and now serves as secretary general. "What amazes me about the Movement is that you can be a big National Society, or you can be a small one, but you have the same rights and responsibilities in the Movement to take part in decisions and to assist the vulnerable."

In the community

Throughout the course of the statutory meetings, our communication team has been engaging online communities via social media. In our latest poll we asked our Twitter followers what would improve their volunteering experience. Here's how they responded: Opportunities to learn new skills 40%, more leadership opportunities 28%, greater recognition for contributions 19%, activities tailored to my interests 7% and stronger legal protection 6%.