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**31st INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE
OF THE RED CROSS AND RED CRESCENT**

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**Furthering the auxiliary role:
Partnership for stronger National Societies
and volunteering development**

Resolution

**Document prepared by
International Federation of the Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies with
consultation with the International Committee of the Red Cross**

RESOLUTION

Furthering the auxiliary: Partnership for stronger National Societies and volunteering development

The 31st International Conference of the Red Cross and Red Crescent,

In terms of

(I) Furthering the auxiliary role and strengthening National Societies:

recalling Resolution 2 of the 30th International Conference of the Red Cross and Red Crescent (Geneva, 26-30 November 2007) whereby States and National Societies, the latter as auxiliaries to their public authorities in the humanitarian field, enjoy a specific and distinctive partnership at all levels, entailing mutual responsibilities and benefits, and based on international and national laws, in which the State and the National Society agree on the areas in which the latter supplements or substitutes for public humanitarian services;

recalling that National Societies, in the fulfilment of their auxiliary role, may provide valuable support to their respective public authorities, including in the implementation of their obligations under international law (in particular, international humanitarian law), and by co-operation in related tasks, such as health and social services, disaster management and restoring family links.

1. *calls upon* National Societies and their respective public authorities at all levels to pursue and enhance balanced partnerships with clear and mutual responsibilities,
2. *encourages* National Societies to initiate or pursue a dialogue, as required, with their national authorities with a view to strengthening their legal base in domestic law, in accordance with Movement standards, through sound Red Cross/Red Crescent laws, so as to strengthen their auxiliary role in the humanitarian field and to formalise the commitment of national authorities to respect the duty and ability of National Societies to abide by the Fundamental Principles, in particular the principle of Independence;
3. *requests States, National Societies, the ICRC and the International Federation enhance their work* to strengthen the legal base of National Societies, specifically in regard to the statutes of NS in view of creating more effective, accountable and transparent National Societies who are able to adhere at all times to the Fundamental Principles, and welcomes the continued commitment of National Societies to achieve this goal;
4. *calls upon* States to create the conditions for more favourable and effective access by National Societies to people in need, which is a primary challenge in organizing a sustainable response.
5. Encourages relevant government departments and other donors are encouraged to provide a predictable and regular flow of resources adapted to the operational needs of their National Societies;
6. *stresses* in this regard the importance of States' long-term support and resourcing to contribute to the good functioning and development of National Societies as their auxiliaries in the humanitarian field as appropriate to ensure relevance of National Society activities within their national context, ability to undertake core functions, such

as emergency response, as well as National Society stability, adaptability, accountability through sustainable organisational development;

7. *invites* the International Federation and the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), in consultation with States and National Societies, to make available and further develop relevant information material for National Societies, the public authorities and other interested bodies, including guidance on partnerships with public administration, legal advice and best practices on Red Cross/Red Crescent law with examples of tax exemptions and specific provisions on resource distribution.

(II) Volunteering Development

Recognizing that volunteers have been at the core of the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement since it was first conceived of in 1859 and that today, as ever, they are central to all activities of the Movement, contributing to the success of National Societies, and assisting millions of vulnerable people in times of greatest need;

acknowledging thereby that volunteer development is a key prerequisite to strengthening National Societies, an essential element of their operational efficiency and of the role they play as auxiliaries to the public authorities in humanitarian field;

recalling the Fundamental Principle of Voluntary Service, and the centrality of volunteering and the spirit of voluntary service within the Movement;

recognising the outstanding contribution of 13.1 million Red Cross and Red Crescent volunteers to meeting the needs of vulnerable people, and the opportunity for public authorities at all levels to take positive actions to understand and improve the environment within which volunteers operate in order for National Societies to be able to increase the scale and the scope of volunteer service delivery;

recalling the Youth Declaration adopted by the Red Cross and Red Crescent volunteers at the commemoration of the 150th anniversary of the battle of Solferino in 2009; reiterating their commitment to promote the cause of humanity worldwide;

recognising the wider benefits of volunteering within society, and that public authorities have a responsibility to deepen the understanding of the value of and take practical measures to encourage volunteering;

understanding that one such practical measure includes developing applicable legal and policy contexts in which volunteering occurs;

recalling that the 27th International Conference in 1999 recognized the importance of volunteers for national societies, and Resolution 1, Annex 2, Final Goal 3.3 para. 13(b) placed the responsibility on states to “review and where necessary, introduce or update legislation so as to facilitate the efficient work of relevant voluntary organisations.”;

recalling the pledge by International Federation at the 27th International Conference to *inter alia*, “cooperate with governments to broaden the existing legal, fiscal and political bases for volunteering, and to mobilize increased public support”;

recalling the guidance document issued in 2004 by the IFRC, Inter-Parliamentary Union and United Nations Volunteers the “Volunteerism and Legislation: a Guidance Note” and its valuable contribution;

noting with appreciation the work done by United Nations Volunteers in undertaking a study in 2009, “*Law and Policies Affecting Volunteerism since 2001*” culminating in United Nations Volunteers 2010 guidance note on “*Drafting and Implementing Volunteerism Laws and Policies*”;

noting also with appreciation the IFRC complementary study on the specific legal issues arising in regard to the particular context of volunteers working in emergency and disaster situations;

understanding that in order to ensure a protective and enabling legal environment for volunteering to function, in all settings including emergencies and disaster situations, the following aspects of national volunteering law and policy are critical;

- i. Appropriate legal recognition of volunteers/volunteering activities;
- ii. Clarity in regard to employment and volunteering;
- iii. Laws facilitating volunteering from all sectors of society, regardless of employment status, gender, age, and any other forms of discrimination;
- iv. Appropriate protection for volunteers including clarity in responsibilities and liabilities and assurances for the health and safety of volunteers;

noting the Declaration of the 1st Global Volunteer Conference jointly organised by United Nations Volunteers and the IFRC as part of the 10th Anniversary of the International Year of Volunteers recognising the role of volunteers in contributing toward the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and sustainable development;

1. *In this regard calls upon* States and National Societies to create and maintain an enabling environment for volunteering. In particular, respective public authorities at all levels are encouraged to:
 - a. in light of the work done by United Nations Volunteers and IFRC, undertake a review of relevant national law and policies and work to strengthen such frameworks as appropriate;
 - b. ensure safe access for Red Cross and Red Crescent volunteers to all vulnerable groups in their respective countries;
 - c. integrate volunteer capacity into domestic emergency response plans at all levels;
 - d. promote volunteering through measures encouraging citizens’ engagement in such activities,
 - e. deepen their understanding of the role and impact that Red Cross/Red Crescent volunteers have in national social and economic development, as well as in responding to crises.
 - f. facilitate the voluntary work of their National Society and support its efforts to mobilize recruit, train and retain volunteers;
2. *encourages* National Societies to include adequate provisions defining the status, as well as the rights and duties of volunteers within their statutory and constitutional base instruments.