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OF THE RED CROSS AND RED CRESCENT**

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**Strengthening the International Red Cross and Red Crescent
Movement response to growing humanitarian needs**

Background report

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Societies and the International Committee of the Red Cross**

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Background report

Introduction

As the largest humanitarian network in the world, the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement (Movement) is composed of sister organizations sharing a common purpose, identity and emblems, bound by the Movement's Statutes and its seven Fundamental Principles.¹ Combining local and global action with a unique blend of complementary mandates and competences, the over 16 million volunteers and staff representing the Movement operate in an environment that is complex, unpredictable and constantly evolving, in which humanitarian needs are visibly multiplying. Today, just as when they were first adopted 50 years ago,² the Fundamental Principles are instrumental in enabling National Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (National Societies), the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (International Federation) and the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) to gain the acceptance and access necessary to work in close proximity with people affected by armed conflict, disasters and other emergencies. These principles distinguish the Movement from other humanitarian actors and are a vital element of the collective identity of all Movement components worldwide, "the cement which holds the stones together to make of them a solid and well-built edifice."³

All of the Movement's components are aware that to fulfil the goal of meeting today's increasing humanitarian needs, they cannot maintain the status quo; together they must do better, in terms of both quality and quantity. Therefore, in recent Movement meetings, including the 2015 Council of Delegates of the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement (Council of Delegates) and the 19th Session of the General Assembly of the International Federation in 2013, a number of proposals, designed to improve the way the Movement as a whole responds to the needs of people affected by armed conflict and disasters, were considered.

The purpose of this resolution is to inform the International Conference about some of the key decisions adopted by the Movement during these important fora – in particular those related to its ambition to reliably enhance its humanitarian response capacity – and to seek the support and commitment of States in implementing these decisions.

What the Movement is doing to meet the challenges

The Movement has a history that goes back more than 150 years. Over this time it has garnered a wealth of experience that has made it a solid, dependable, well-trusted and far-reaching humanitarian network. Driven by the Fundamental Principle of humanity, its action is based on the desire to prevent and alleviate human suffering wherever it may be found, to protect life and health and to ensure respect for human dignity.

Building on the past to construct the future, the "**Vision for the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement**" as presented to the 2015 Council of Delegates is inspired by the desire of all Movement components to strengthen efforts to respond to humanitarian needs, in full adherence to the Fundamental Principles. It stresses, in particular, that meeting the health needs of armed conflict- and disaster-affected people and vulnerable communities is a

¹ Humanity, impartiality, neutrality, independence, voluntary service, unity, universality.

² The Fundamental Principles were adopted by the 20th International Conference in Vienna in October 1965.

³ Jean Pictet, "The Fundamental Principles of the Red Cross: A Commentary," *International Review of the Red Cross*, Vol. 19, No. 210, May-June 1979, pp. 130-149, at p. 33.

powerful feature of the Movement's operational identity and a major common focus. The key to achieving the Vision lies in harnessing the diversity and strength of the Movement, to which end cooperation, coordination and enhanced internal synergies remain paramount. The Vision further emphasizes the essential role of National Societies in their own countries – where each National Society is able to capitalize on its community roots and strong volunteer networks, as well as on its privileged relationship as auxiliary to its government in the humanitarian field. Empowering beneficiaries, embracing new technologies and appealing to youth are also recognized as vital aspects of the Movement's strategic vision.

A central outcome of the 2015 Council of Delegates was the commitment to **strengthening Movement coordination and cooperation** to improve the efficiency and timeliness of the response to humanitarian needs in large-scale emergencies. In the resolution and report submitted to the Council in this regard, the Movement identified the factors most conducive to efficient coordination. It also committed to collectively investing in ensuring more inclusive and complementary coordination approaches, in increasing operational coordination in preparedness and in response, in ensuring coherent internal and external communication, and in a strengthened commitment to join and harmonize resource mobilization efforts. The adopted Plan of Action, building on best practices, entails specific objectives and action to be implemented collectively by the components of the Movement.

Linked to the above, and considering that the Movement is a network of organizations all enabled to display the red cross and red crescent emblems in accordance with the 1949 Geneva Conventions and their Additional Protocols, the ICRC and the International Federation, together with National Societies, submitted to the 2015 Council of Delegates a resolution adopting a Movement **logo** to enhance the Movement's brand through a joint visual identity for indicative use. In given situations, the Movement aims to be visible as one and to speak with a coherent and coordinated voice. Being able to communicate as an international movement and to promote its collective humanitarian work is seen as an important part of this strategy. The Movement logo will be used exceptionally for joint representation and communication initiatives and for fundraising and promotional activities when the cause being fundraised for is one of global interest or concern to the ICRC, International Federation and National Societies. It is intended to be complementary to existing logos of Movement components and will be displayed within the framework of applicable rules of international humanitarian law and of the regulatory framework agreed upon within the Movement

The 21st International Conference in 1969 adopted the "**Principles and Rules for Red Cross and Red Crescent Disaster Relief**."⁴ In 2013 National Societies endorsed a revised version better reflecting the complementary roles of National Societies and the International Federation when assisting one another. The new "**Principles and Rules for Red Cross and Red Crescent Humanitarian Assistance**" encompass preparedness for response, disaster relief and early recovery activities in situations excluding armed conflict, internal strife or their direct results (as such situations pose specific challenges). They complement existing Movement-wide agreements and are a key part of the Movement's broader regulatory framework related to the Movement's operational coordination. The Principles and Rules also strengthen the commitment to disaster risk reduction and encourage National Societies to boost community resilience through linking relief, recovery and development action. They establish a coordinated and agreed approach to quality and accountability, and recognize the importance

⁴ Adopted by the 21st International Conference of the Red Cross (Istanbul, 1969), revised by the 22nd, 23rd, 24th, 25th and 26th International Conferences – Tehran (1973), Bucharest (1977), Manila (1981), Geneva (1986) and Geneva (1995).

of partnership with public authorities, other humanitarian actors, and organizations outside the Movement.

The Movement's activities are coordinated with and complement those of other humanitarian actors and are motivated by a shared ambition to help people in need. The respective components of the Movement have been actively participating in the consultations leading up to the **World Humanitarian Summit** due to take place in Istanbul in May 2016. The Council of Delegates therefore considered it relevant to address a common message to the Summit.