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**31<sup>st</sup> International Conference of the Red Cross Red Crescent**  
Geneva, 28 November–1 December – **For humanity**



## **31st International Conference of the Red Cross and Red Crescent**

Geneva, Switzerland: 28 November – 1 December 2011

### **REPORT ON THE WORK OF COMMISSION B**

(Tuesday 29 November – 09:00 a.m to 11: 30 a.m)

#### **FURTHERING THE AUXILIARY ROLE: PARTNERSHIPS FOR STRONGER NATIONAL SOCIETIES AND VOLUNTEERING DEVELOPMENT**

Chair: Professor Dr. Dragan Radovanović

Alternate chair:

Secretary: Ms Rudina Pema (IFRC)

Drafter of report: Ian Steed (IFRC)

## **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

National Societies are recognised by all governments as auxiliary to the public authorities in the humanitarian field. A main function of the auxiliary role of National Societies is to supplement or substitute for public humanitarian services in order to address the vulnerabilities that exist in their countries. The Statutes of the Movement require that National Societies maintain their independence in accordance with the Fundamental Principles of the Movement.

A sound legal base for the National Society, including reference to the National Society's auxiliary role reviewed regularly and updated, is required as a basis for partnerships at all levels of public administration with clear and mutual responsibilities. These may be extended through formal agreements in areas of National Society expertise and capacity, as well as through National Society representation on relevant national, regional and local committees and *fora*, enabling formal as well as informal dialogue, and a culture of mutual respect to develop between National Societies and government.

Government support for National Society resourcing may be financial or in-kind. It can include tax exemptions and reduced property rents, for example, but also provision of in-kind support, such as seconded staff, or provision of services. Support for National Society resourcing may be an ongoing discussion between governments and National Societies.

Development and implementation of legislation and policy at all levels is one aspect of developing an enabling environment for volunteering. In doing so, legislative and policy barriers to volunteering should be identified and removed. However any legislation should be adapted to the specific context in which it is to be applied. More broadly, government at all levels should recognise the social and economic impact of volunteering, as well as the capacity of vulnerable people themselves to be volunteers.

The ICRC and IFRC can help support states and National Societies in further implementing the auxiliary role by developing guidance materials as well as continuing to advocate for progress in this area.

### **General Observations:**

#### **- Speakers**

Dr. Zhao Baige, Executive Vice-President, Chinese Red Cross outlined the ongoing evolution of the relationship between National Society and state in the context of deep-rooted social and economic change and she illustrated how a local branch developed its volunteer capacity, raising the interest of public authorities who then provided resources.

Mr. Ebrima Sanneh, President, Gambia Red Cross described the relationship between the Gambia Red Cross Society and all levels of government, giving precise examples of what the partnership entailed.

Mr. Américo José Ubisse, Secretary General, Mozambique Red Cross society described the process and benefits of the work of the National Society to support development of national volunteering legislation.

Mr Valery Malashko, Chairman, Belarus Red Cross and Deputy Governor of Mogilev region described the benefits of cooperation between National Society and government at a regional level in catalysing and supporting local volunteer services.

- Other observations: The session was attended by 100 – 120 participants, with a majority from National Societies, who also dominated the speaking list.

**To the extent possible, please structure the report around the Guiding Questions provided.**

➤ **KEY POINTS RAISED for guiding question 1** : How can National Societies and their respective public authorities pursue and enhance partnerships with clear and reciprocal responsibilities at all levels of the public administration and of the National Society organisation?

- Governments should establish a clear legal base for the National Society, including reference to the auxiliary role, and review regularly and update when necessary.
- Governments should recognise National Societies' skills and competences as complementary to governments' own capacities to meet the needs of vulnerable people.
- Governments and National Societies should respect the Fundamental Principles, specifically the principle of Independence in developing mutually beneficial partnerships.
- Governments and National Societies should build mutual trust and respect through formal and informal dialogue at all levels.
- Government should involve the National Society in relevant committees and *fora* at all levels.
- In developing partnerships, National Societies and governments should develop clearly defined partnerships including mutual inputs and expectation.

➤ **KEY POINTS RAISED for guiding question 2** : How to ensure a predictable and regular flow of resources to enable effective functioning and sustainable development of National Societies?

- Governments should understand that the resourcing of National Societies is a complement to their own capacities to meet the needs of vulnerable people.
- Governments may discuss with their respective National Society how they can support their development.
- Examples for direct and indirect financial support to National Societies included tax exemptions, reduced rents and concessionary tariffs.
- Examples for provision of in-kind support included volunteer transport and the loan of competent staff.
- Governments can also support National Societies to seek further financial resources.

**KEY POINTS RAISED for guiding question 3:** How to promote enabling environments for volunteering?

- Governments should recognise the potential for volunteers to meet humanitarian needs, and take steps to promote volunteering at all levels.
- National Societies and governments can work together and with other civil society actors to develop and implement context-specific and appropriate legislation and policy around volunteering.
- In examining legislation, governments should remove barriers to volunteer involvement – for example in not penalising unemployment benefit claimants who volunteer.
- National Societies and governments should encourage volunteering by vulnerable people.

➤ **KEY POINTS RAISED for guiding question 4:** How the International Federation and the ICRC can support both National Societies and States in furthering the auxiliary role along the lines of the resolution?

- The ICRC and IFRC can develop materials and best practice to help National Societies establish the auxiliary role within the framework of the Fundamental Principles.

- The IFRC and ICRC can support National Societies in advocating for strengthened auxiliary partnerships with individual governments.
- The IFRC can provide resources and support in developing volunteering legislation.

#### **CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS:**

- It is important for legislation on both the auxiliary role and volunteering to be followed up and implemented.
- National Societies and governments wishing to further the auxiliary role may benefit from the experiences of other governments and National Societies, and such exchange could be facilitated by the secretariat of the International Federation.
- Legislation and policy relating to volunteering must be based on the specific national culture and context.