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**COUNCIL OF DELEGATES
OF THE INTERNATIONAL RED CROSS
AND RED CRESCENT MOVEMENT**

Geneva, Switzerland
7 December 2015

**International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement
message to the
World Humanitarian Summit**

Resolution

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

RESOLUTION

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The Council of Delegates,

welcoming the World Humanitarian Summit and its widespread efforts to identify how best to improve global humanitarian response,

noting the active participation of all components of the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement in the World Humanitarian Summit consultations contributing the perspective of the world's largest humanitarian network,

1. *adopts* the enclosed message to the World Humanitarian Summit;
2. *requests* to present it to the 32nd International Conference of the Red Cross and Red Crescent as part of the resolution on "International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement response to growing humanitarian needs";
3. *calls on* the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies and the International Committee of the Red Cross to deliver it to the World Humanitarian Summit in the most appropriate form.

Movement Message to the World Humanitarian Summit

The International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement welcomes the World Humanitarian Summit (WHS) and the exceptional effort in its consultations to identify how best to improve global humanitarian response. National Societies, the ICRC and the International Federation have participated actively in the WHS consultations contributing our perspective as the world's largest humanitarian network distinguished by our Fundamental Principles and our vast number of trained volunteers and staff. Our unique organization works in all types of humanitarian contexts and during the consultations we have shared our expertise in disasters and armed conflict.

Protect the Dignity of Every Human Being and Improve Humanitarian Access to Those in Need

The principle of humanity sits at the heart of all humanitarian work and is the goal of everything we do. This principle requires respect for the individual human being at all times.

We ask the WHS to achieve clear commitments on respect for human dignity and people's assistance and protection in disaster, armed conflict and other emergencies.

All humanitarian response should be designed and delivered with a determination to respect and increase human dignity and to protect vulnerable individuals and their communities. Participation is an important part of human dignity. Humanitarian response should actively include affected people in the relief of their own suffering and the reduction of their risk. Being active in one's survival and recovery generates and preserves a sense of dignity. The WHS needs to promote the participation and empowerment of affected people in humanitarian action.

We ask the WHS to recognize access, proximity and trust as essential features in effective humanitarian action.

Humanitarian access is essential to humanitarian success. Our Movement's staff and volunteers reach into the hardest and most remote parts of a crisis, and our experience proves that the best humanitarian response is built together with the affected community. To work together well, humanitarian agencies must be close to the communities who need them and work in cooperation with the relevant authorities. Trust is built most effectively through proximity. A true understanding of how best to meet people's needs develops from being close to the reality of people's lives.

Affirm the Complementarity of Local, National and International Action

Vulnerable people, governments, humanitarian organizations and civil society all have essential roles and responsibilities in risk reduction, emergency response, and recovery from humanitarian crises.

We ask the WHS to encourage governments to increase their capacity to ensure humanitarian response and respect international law.

Governments have the primary obligation under domestic and international law to ensure that the basic needs of the population under their control are met, to limit risk and harm, and to allow and facilitate international assistance. International humanitarian law also establishes obligations on non-state armed groups. Few governments are fully prepared for this role, and often lack clear procedures, necessary institutional arrangements and trained personnel to ensure that assistance is effectively managed, within the limits of international law.

We ask the WHS to deliver a significant change in the effectiveness of local humanitarian response while respecting a complementary balance between local,

national and international actors. The value of local humanitarian responders has been proved. The empowerment of government and local actors is central in our Movement, in our relations with States and in our own Code of Conducts.¹ Local responders are often in the strongest position to deliver rapid, culturally appropriate and sustainable humanitarian assistance to their communities. For example, in West Africa, well before the world woke up to the true nature of the Ebola threat, local health workers and affected communities were treating and isolating the sick, and burying the dead. In Syria, Red Crescent staff and volunteers have continued to carry out humanitarian operations in extremely challenging conditions and at great personal risk. The international system still places an overwhelming emphasis on international actors, leaving local organizations insufficient influence over operational decision-making and humanitarian policy. Global humanitarian financing centres on international organizations. There is not enough direct financing of affected governments and local humanitarian organizations.

This imbalance must be changed. More sustained investment in national response systems and basic services will deliver stronger partnerships between local and international actors. The capacity of principled local actors needs to be prioritized and improved. This includes ensuring that local actors, like Red Cross and Red Crescent volunteers who operate in dangerous conditions, are protected and insured.

Local humanitarian response can face genuine limits when governments and local organizations do not have the capacity, will or expertise to protect and assist people in need. Principled humanitarian activities can also be dangerous for local actors in polarized societies. In such contexts, principled international humanitarian support must be duly recognized and facilitated in the best interests of vulnerable people. In armed conflict, international humanitarian law recognizes such complementarity and entitles impartial humanitarian organizations such as the ICRC to offer their services, which must be authorized under certain circumstances.

Take the Long View of People's Needs

Our experience shows that disasters and armed conflicts are long-term experiences for people and play out in vulnerabilities preceding, during and after any major crisis. Millions have to live with chronic risk, entrenched vulnerability and recurring crisis for decades. These crises are also long term challenges for governments as people's resources, basic services and State infrastructure struggle to survive long-term degradation.

We ask the WHS to prioritize forms of investment that meet humanitarian needs and also increase individual, community and national resilience. Investing in individual, community and national resilience is an essential part of this long view. People need to be prepared and become as resilient and adaptive as possible to the risks of their environment so they can meet their needs, reduce their risks and take evasive action when necessary. This adaptation requires active support and investment that is predictable, sustained and flexible. States and people need resilient infrastructure, resilient services and resilient livelihoods but, in armed conflict, people should never be expected to become resilient to recurrent violations of international humanitarian law such as direct attacks against civilians or civilian objects, indiscriminate attacks, rape, forced displacement and starvation.

We ask the WHS to encourage long-term strategic humanitarian investments in situations of protracted conflict and chronic crisis. Protracted conflict, chronic crisis and

¹ See The Code of Conduct for the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement and NGOs in Disaster Relief (1994) and the Principles and Rules for Red Cross and Red Crescent Humanitarian Assistance (2013).

extended situations of displacement require a long view from affected States, humanitarian organizations and their donors. Support to critical infrastructure and services needs to be strategically planned and supported by predictable and flexible multi-year finance. Development reversals must be limited as much as possible and strategic humanitarian investments should be sensitive to SDG targets to reduce hunger, improve health and maintain resilient water, sanitation and energy infrastructure for the many millions of people impoverished by conflict and disaster.

We ask the WHS to prioritize humanitarian innovation in line with ethical principles that ensure that all innovations serve the best interests of people in need. Our Movement has been at the forefront of important humanitarian innovations like cash assistance, improved war surgery and the application of new technology in family tracing and community engagement. More innovation is essential as we rise to the challenge of intricate long-term needs. Urban innovations will be especially important as a great part of our work now supports people in cities. Our experience shows that innovation must be tested against humanitarian principles and ethical innovation principles as developed in our Movement.

Recognize and Enable Different Humanitarian Systems

A sense of humanity encourages many different actors to protect and assist communities living through armed conflict, disasters and crisis.

We ask the WHS to recognize that there is not a single international system of humanitarian response but to respect and enable the synergy of different systems.

Effective collective action will come from mutual respect for the diversity of humanitarian actors, and not from a desire to impose one system over others. The challenge is not to fix one system but to bring together diverse capacities and systems effectively around a given context and to work within a strong common humanitarian code, which puts humanity first.