

**Power of humanity**  
Council of Delegates of the International  
Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement



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

**Strengthening anticipatory humanitarian action in the Movement:  
Our way forward**

**Draft elements of resolution**

**Document prepared by  
the German Red Cross in consultation with the  
International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies,  
the Red Cross Red Crescent Climate Centre,  
the International Committee of the Red Cross and National Societies**

Geneva, March 2021

## Background

The draft elements of the proposed resolution “Strengthening anticipatory humanitarian action in the Movement: Our way forward” seek to provide an outline of the possible substance of individual paragraphs, without providing a definitive draft text. Each paragraph is followed by a rationale explaining why it would be useful to include such a paragraph in the resolution.

This document is being shared for consultation with the members of the Council of Delegates of the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement in order to gather a first round of comments and feedback and to gain an initial understanding of whether the proposed approach would be acceptable and garner consensus.

When providing comments and feedback on this document, please consider the following questions:

- Do you agree with the proposed elements for the preambular and operative paragraphs of the proposed resolution?
- Are there any elements that are missing or should be included in the resolution?

Detailed comments on the wording of the draft elements of this resolution are not expected at this stage. There will be an opportunity to comment on specific wording at a later stage, once the draft zero of the resolution is available.

## Introduction

According to the *World Disasters Report 2020*, in the past decade alone, more than 1.7 billion people around the world were affected by climate- and weather-related disasters, with many suffering injuries, being left homeless and losing their livelihoods. These hazards are hitting everywhere, but vulnerability is highest in developing countries, particularly in armed conflict situations and fragile contexts. With advances in science, remote sensing and data processing, extreme events can be predicted with increasing accuracy. Building on decades of experience in Disaster Risk Reduction and Early Warning Early Action, the Red Cross and Red Crescent network has been making use of these advances to increase its engagement in anticipatory action, by developing, among other things, Forecast-based Financing (FbF), an anticipatory humanitarian action approach in which funding is automatically allocated when critical forecast thresholds are reached so that pre-agreed early actions can be taken before the shock.

Anticipatory approaches have gained significant momentum in recent years. In addition to the pioneering work carried out by the Red Cross and Red Crescent network and the World Food Programme (WFP) in FbF, other humanitarian agencies, such as the Start Network, the Food and Agriculture Organization and the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, are funding and developing similar approaches. These stakeholders all agree that the following parameters can be used to define anticipatory action: it (1) happens in anticipation of a hazard impact, (2) aims to prevent or mitigate the impact and (3) is predicated on a forecast and/or collaborative analysis of a future event. Anticipatory approaches are now being implemented in over 60 countries. This is accompanied by a growing commitment by governments to anticipatory action, as evidenced, for example, in various UN resolutions, the Risk-informed Early Action Partnership (REAP) launched at the 2019 UN Climate Summit and the increasing opportunities to use climate finance to enable anticipatory action. These initiatives complement the wider work of the development and climate community to strengthen disaster risk financing in government systems.

Despite these encouraging developments, more needs to be done for anticipatory humanitarian action to be firmly anchored within the humanitarian system as a transformative solution to rising risks. Building on the successful piloting efforts of recent years, the objective now is to scale up and mainstream anticipatory action as an approach across disaster risk management processes and frameworks. Scaling up means dedicating more funding to expanding anticipatory action so that more people can receive assistance ahead of shocks. It

also means expanding the geographic coverage and types of shocks that can be anticipated as well as the ability and capacity of the system to respond collectively in a coordinated manner, most notably in countries affected by conflict or instability.

The 2021 Council of Delegates presents a timely opportunity for the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement (the Movement) as a whole to declare its commitment to scaling up anticipatory action and to strengthening the Movement's capacities, advocacy and expertise in this area so that it can better assist vulnerable populations in protecting themselves and their livelihoods from extreme events, while at the same time maintaining and building on its role as a champion in this area. The proposed resolution aims to increase commitment in the areas of strengthening capacities, expanding the approach and widening its application in order to overcome current and potential barriers to scaling up at the required pace.

The proposed resolution would be an appropriate and valuable contribution to the Council's decisions on "how we work". As highlighted in the Concept Note for the Council of Delegates, agility is needed to ensure effective impact and meet the needs of the most vulnerable. By adapting our operations and procedures so that the Movement can anticipate and mitigate the risks of extreme events, we can contribute greatly to reducing the suffering and losses of vulnerable populations.

### **Preambular paragraphs (PP)**

***PP1: A preambular paragraph could express deep concern about the impacts of extreme weather events on vulnerable populations. It could also note how climate change will increase these impacts unless action is taken.***

**Rationale:** The proportion of disasters triggered by natural hazards attributable to climate and extreme weather events rose to 83% in the 2010s, according to the *World Disasters Report 2020* of the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC). Global warming is resulting in an increasingly volatile climate system, with more and sometimes unprecedented extremes, for instance, more category 4 and 5 storms, more heat waves breaking temperature records and more heavy rains. The most vulnerable communities across the world have limited capacity and support to cope with extremes. The Report found that none of the 20 most vulnerable countries were among the 20 highest per capita recipients of climate adaptation funding.

***PP2: A preambular paragraph could stress that extreme weather events occurring during the COVID-19 pandemic have shown the impact of compounding hazards on vulnerable populations.***

**Rationale:** As disasters increase in frequency and intensity, we can expect there to be not only less time to recover between them, but also multiple disasters happening at once, resulting in what are called compounding shocks. For example, the dangers of extreme weather events did not diminish while the world was adapting to the COVID-19 pandemic. As at September 2020, at least 51.6 million people worldwide had been affected by floods, droughts or storms at the same time as COVID-19. When hazards combine, they can multiply each other's impact in unprecedented ways that governments, civil society and the humanitarian sector have never before had to face.

***PP3: A preambular paragraph could highlight that vulnerability to extreme weather events is highest in armed conflict situations and fragile contexts.***

**Rationale:** Extreme events are affecting people in armed conflict and fragile contexts the most. According to a study by the Overseas Development Institute, 58% of deaths from natural hazard-related disasters occur in the top 30 most fragile States, and the numbers of people affected often go unreported or are vastly under-reported. As shown in the Notre Dame Global Adaptation Initiative, eight out of the ten countries that are most vulnerable and least ready to

adapt to climate change are mired in conflict. Yet the least amount of climate finance goes to these countries, because of the challenges attached to financing and long-term programming in such settings. Too often, people living in these locations are not reached by early warnings, much less early action. Anticipatory humanitarian action for climate impacts in such contexts is therefore crucial to support the most vulnerable but needs to be adapted to the complexities of the interplay between fragility/conflict and climate hazards.

***PP4: A preambular paragraph could recognize that, in most cases, forecast information about extreme weather events is available before they happen and that the accuracy of such information and risk analysis to assess potential impacts have improved considerably over the years, providing humanitarian actors such as the Movement with the opportunity to act ahead of the impact of extreme weather events.***

**Rationale:** With advances in science, remote sensing and data processing, extreme events can be predicted with increasing accuracy, often days, weeks and sometimes even months in advance.

***PP5: A preambular paragraph could recognize the role that anticipatory action can play in reducing disaster risk, suffering and losses and in limiting the impact of extreme weather events on people and acknowledge the Movement's responsibility to act.***

**Rationale:** There is tremendous evidence that early warning and early action save lives and livelihoods. The World Bank estimates that the potential benefits from upgrading early warning and early action capacity in all developing countries include an average of 23,000 lives saved per year and between US\$ 300 million and US\$ 2 billion per year of avoided asset losses due to natural disasters. In Peru, for example, early action efforts led to a reduction in deaths from 9,300 during the El Niño episodes of 1982/83 and 1997/98 to just 20 during the 2015/16 El Niño. Based on post-disaster evaluations, some experts have concluded that early action can reduce the burden of emergency response and make it more effective even when taking into consideration the possibility that early action may be taken without an extreme event actually occurring. Assessments by WFP in Nepal found that US\$ 34 were saved in response costs per dollar invested in FbF and long-term recovery needs were lower. The Movement, through its volunteers and constant presence, is often best able to act early when hazards are approaching. This brings with it a responsibility that should be embraced by more systematically developing the capacity to intervene as soon as a risk has been identified.

***PP6: A preambular paragraph could recognize and emphasize the Movement's ongoing work to reduce disaster risk and the instruments available. It could highlight the advances in FbF and anticipatory humanitarian action.***

**Rationale:** Building on decades of experience in Disaster Risk Reduction and Early Warning Early Action, the Movement has been making use of advances in forecasting to develop FbF, an anticipatory humanitarian action approach in which funding is automatically allocated when critical forecast thresholds are reached so that pre-agreed early actions can be taken before the shock. This approach is now being implemented by National Societies in 29 countries, addressing hazards such as heat waves, cold waves, storms, floods, droughts and volcanic ash flows. In 2018 the IFRC established Forecast-based Action (FbA) by the Disaster Relief Emergency Fund (DREF), a financing mechanism that provides funding for National Societies once they have their early action plans in place.

***PP7: A preambular paragraph could highlight that approaches have already been implemented successfully, but need to be widened, and refer to the challenges faced with regard to resources, capacities, institutional barriers and political dynamics.***

**Rationale:** There is growing evidence that anticipatory action saves lives and livelihoods and can make humanitarian assistance faster, more cost-effective and more dignified. However, it needs to grow in scale in terms of people and regions reached, hazards covered and funding

available so that suffering and losses can be significantly reduced. This will require specific challenges to be tackled, such as working across organizations and governmental departments, investing in the necessary capacities at a local and national level and supporting leadership from donors who are willing to move beyond traditional humanitarian response mechanisms.

***PP8: A preambular paragraph could recall and reaffirm the commitment of the components of the Movement to improving protection of vulnerable populations from the impacts of extreme events, by investing in anticipatory action at scale and establishing an Anticipation Hub.***

**Rationale:** Resolution 33IC/19/R7 “Disaster laws and policies that leave no one behind”, approved at the 33rd International Conference, encourages States to consider, as appropriate, innovative approaches to disaster risk management, such as the use of anticipatory finance, including forecast-based triggers for the early and timely release of response funding to rapidly mitigate the impact of disasters. The Movement Ambitions to Address the Climate Crisis identify early action planning and financing as a way to scale up climate-smart disaster risk reduction. The IFRC’s Strategy 2030 calls for the use of technology and innovation to anticipate risks and disasters and provide proactive early action and predictable financing. The Anticipation Hub, launched in December 2020, has more than 60 partners, including humanitarian actors, governments and research institutions. Hosted by the German Red Cross, the IFRC and the Red Cross Red Crescent Climate Centre, it promotes the exchange of knowledge and experience among practitioners of anticipatory action and facilitates joint learning, efforts and advocacy for scaling up anticipatory action.

***PP9: A preambular paragraph could recognize the leadership and influence of the Movement in driving the progress of anticipatory humanitarian action at the international level, for example, its involvement in establishing REAP at the 2019 UN Climate Action Summit and influencing the inclusion of anticipatory action in several UN resolutions.***

**Rationale:** Important contributions have been made in this area by many other actors, including governments, the World Meteorological Organization, the World Bank, the UN Office for Disaster Risk Reduction and the Climate Risk and Early Warning Systems (CREWS) initiative. Most recently, the World Bank introduced the Crisis Response Window early response mechanism – a 500 million US dollar (490 million Swiss franc) crisis fund that builds in pre-planning requirements to support anticipatory action for pandemics and food insecurity crises. REAP, launched at the UN General Assembly in New York in 2019, intends to protect a billion people in the developing world from extreme weather. Its secretariat is hosted by the IFRC in Geneva.

### **Operative paragraphs (OP)**

***OP1: An operative paragraph could call upon the Movement to increase its engagement on anticipatory action, particularly with a view to extending its geographical reach, either by establishing systems, capacities and partnerships to operationalize anticipatory action within country contexts or by supporting National Societies in high-risk contexts to do so.***

**Rationale:** To scale up anticipatory action and ensure people in the most high-risk contexts are covered, an increase in the number of National Societies engaging in anticipatory action is crucial. An increase in operational anticipatory action initiatives will also contribute to proving the concept and thereby result in a further shift towards anticipatory action in the humanitarian system.

***OP2: An operative paragraph could request the Movement to take stronger steps to address slower-onset and less visible risks, such as heat waves and droughts, in its work on anticipatory action.***

**Rationale:** Scaling up anticipatory action will also require a joint undertaking to explore anticipatory approaches and extend them to natural climate- and weather-related hazards that have not yet been sufficiently addressed by anticipatory action, such as heat waves and droughts, which often have less visible impacts.

**OP3: An operative paragraph could contain a commitment by the Movement to increase the focus on compounding risk in its work on anticipatory action, enabling National Societies to protect vulnerable populations when multiple hazards occur at once or they experience cascading impacts.**

**Rationale:** When hazards combine, they can multiply each other's impact in unprecedented ways that governments, civil society and the humanitarian sector have never before had to face. These include not only rising climate- and weather-related threats, but also other shocks, such as pandemics and epidemics, earthquakes, armed conflicts and financial crashes. As the Movement is operating in many multi-risk environments where slow- and rapid-onset disasters, the effects of climate change, fragility, economic and policy challenges and other drivers of displacement coincide, there is a need to better assess and anticipate compounding risks.

**OP4: An operative paragraph could include a commitment by the Movement to further explore opportunities to anticipate and act ahead of epidemics, food insecurity and displacement.**

**Rationale:** To reduce vulnerabilities, save lives and lessen human suffering, losses and the need for disaster and crisis response, anticipatory approaches should reflect the complexity of the risks that communities face. This includes risks driven by extreme weather events that have been the focus of many FbF programmes so far, but also other drivers of food insecurity and displacement. Anticipatory approaches are also needed for disease outbreaks and epidemics, a fact starkly underlined by the COVID-19 pandemic.

**OP5: An operative paragraph could encourage the creation of new funding mechanisms or the adaptation of existing ones at national and international level to enable anticipatory funding for hazards and situations not covered by existing mechanisms, based on a set of common principles, aimed at focusing efforts on reducing the impact on the most vulnerable.**

**Rationale:** While a funding mechanism enabling early action by National Societies ahead of extreme weather events has been successfully established with the IFRC's FbA by the DREF, greater efforts and political support are needed at national, sub-national and international level for the adaptation of existing anticipatory funding mechanisms and the creation of new ones to enable anticipatory action in situations that are not yet covered, including health emergencies. Facilitating access to more funding mechanisms and advocating with governments to allocate funds for anticipatory action is key to providing a sustainable way of reaching more people. The adaptation and/or development of new instruments should be human impact-centred, ensuring that financing targets and reaches the people most at risk in the most efficient way, based on robust data that is fit for purpose for humanitarian operations. These mechanisms should be based on risk-oriented localized planning, be transparent, participatory and accountable to target communities, work in coordination with existing mechanisms and disburse funding in accordance with implementation capacity.

**OP6: An operative paragraph could request National Societies to fully integrate anticipatory action into their disaster risk management processes and call upon the Movement to support this process by increasing investments in the anticipatory action capacities of National Societies, notably by supporting the development of triggers, data collection and analysis, identification of the best possible early actions and the setting up of procedures and teams for early action implementation, in particular in urban settings.**

**Rationale:** The capacities of National Societies are at the centre of successful anticipatory action as it is they that develop early actions and systems for their implementation, work with hydromet services on possible triggers and involve communities in planning and implementation. In many cases, however, National Societies may need resources and technical support for their work in these areas. The objective in terms of FbF is for National Societies in high-risk countries to have one Early Action Protocol per hazard per country, allowing the National Society to act anywhere in the country when a forecast indicates severe humanitarian impacts. National Societies should aim to fully integrate anticipatory action and FbF into their disaster risk management processes so that they become part of normal business rather than a project-based approach.

***OP7: An operative paragraph could request National Societies and the International Committee of the Red Cross to strengthen anticipatory humanitarian action in conflict settings, including through improved use of early warning for weather/climate impacts, and thereby contribute to strengthening the resilience of conflict-affected communities in the face of multivariate and compounded shocks.***

**Rationale:** As protracted conflicts and chronic violence considerably limit the capacity to cope with climate risks, people in such situations are disproportionately impacted by extreme weather and climate events. In such environments, early warning and early action tend to be particularly weak. Improving early warning systems, ensuring that they are being used and guaranteeing timely action and access to anticipatory financing in such situations can be critical to achieving a sustainable humanitarian impact, by mitigating risks and losses and strengthening resilience.

***OP8: An operative paragraph could request National Societies and the IFRC to advocate with governments to integrate anticipatory action into their disaster risk management and climate change adaptation policies and structures and increase investments in early warning systems in line with their commitments under the Sendai Framework.***

**Rationale:** National governments play a crucial role in advancing anticipatory approaches within their country in cooperation with the National Society. The integration of anticipatory action into governmental disaster risk management frameworks, national adaptation plans and related policies and financing frameworks would enable concerted efforts and overcome sectoral silos if based on harmonized thresholds for the release of pre-positioned funds and coordinated (joint) action plans. National Societies can play a leading role in supporting governmental planning and convening relevant stakeholders, by bringing in their experience in anticipatory action, data and information sharing and early action planning.

***OP9: An operative paragraph could invite the Movement to use the Anticipation Hub as a central platform and contribute to its work.***

**Rationale:** To scale up anticipatory action, it is necessary to share and exchange learning, research, innovation and best practices throughout the humanitarian system and bring together science, policy and practice. This is the objective of the Anticipation Hub, launched in December 2020.

***OP10: An operative paragraph could request a progress report to be submitted to the 2023 Council of Delegates and the issue of anticipatory humanitarian action to be considered for inclusion in the agenda of the 34th International Conference.***

**Rationale:** Given the growing interest of an increasing number of States in the subject and its high operational relevance for all components of the Movement, it is recommended that this topic be addressed with States at the next International Conference.