



Power of humanity

Council of Delegates of the International Red Cross and
Red Crescent Movement

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Work of the Standing Commission 2020–2022

PROGRESS REPORT

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The 18th session of the Standing Commission of the Red Cross and Red Crescent (Standing Commission) started against the backdrop of the devastation wrought by the COVID-19 pandemic. The public health measures and international travel restrictions have led the Standing Commission to adjust its working methods over the past two years in order to advance its work and fulfil its mandate, namely in the following areas:

- preparing the next meeting of the Council of Delegates, which included taking the decision jointly with International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC), which was deciding on its General Assembly, to postpone from December 2021 to June 2022, in view of the public health situation
- laying the groundwork for the 34th International Conference of the Red Cross and Red Crescent (International Conference)
- encouraging and furthering the implementation of the commitments made at previous statutory meetings of the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement (Movement) and taking part in follow-up processes of particular interest (e.g. review of the Seville Agreement and its Supplementary Measures to enhance the collective impact of the Movement; and the “Statement on integrity of the Movement”)
- promoting harmony within the Movement and exploring the challenges of effective policy-making, monitoring, accountability and compliance, and other matters of common concern
- administering the Movement awards, including by proposing a reform of the Henry Dunant Medal and the Red Cross and Red Crescent Prize for Peace and Humanity and drafting the amendments, and by awarding the 2021 Henry Dunant Medal.

To learn more about the [decisions](#) and activities of the Standing Commission, subscribe to the [Bulletin](#) and visit its website (<https://standcom.ch/>).

1) INTRODUCTION

Functions of the Standing Commission

The Standing Commission is the trustee of the International Conference between conferences.¹ The role and duties of the Standing Commission are defined in Article 18 of the Statutes of the Movement.

The Standing Commission is the only permanent body of the Movement where all components are represented. It has a mandate to prepare for the Council of Delegates and the International Conference, and to examine matters that concern the Movement as a whole. It functions as a forum for reflection on and discussion of issues of Movement-wide significance and has a role in settling differences of opinion, fostering harmony in the Movement and promoting the implementation of the decisions of the Council of Delegates and the International Conference.

To perform its work, the Standing Commission carries out extensive consultations with the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), the IFRC and National Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (National Societies), and with the Swiss Government as the depositary of the Geneva Conventions.

¹ Statutes of the Movement, Article 16

18th session of the Standing Commission (2019–2023) and its members

The 33rd International Conference, held in December 2019, elected five of the nine members of the Standing Commission's 18th session. The composition of the Standing Commission is as shown below.

Members elected in their personal capacity

- Ms Mercedes Babé, chair (Spain)
- Mr George Weber, vice-chair (Canada)
- Dr Hilal Al-Sayer (Kuwait)
- Dr Abbas Gullet (Kenya)
- Ms Fine Tu'itupou Arnold (Cook Islands)

Ex officio members

ICRC

- Dr Peter Maurer, president
- Ms Katrin Wiegmann, deputy director-general

IFRC

- Dr Francesco Rocca, president
- Mr Jagan Chapagain, secretary-general (until May 2021)
- Ms Niamh Lawless, under-secretary-general (since May 2021)

In line with Resolution 4 on enhancing transparency, gender balance and rotation in the election and composition of the Standing Commission, adopted by the Council of Delegates and brought to the attention of the 33rd International Conference in its Resolution 5, the current Standing Commission is pleased to have a balanced composition in terms of gender representation, both among the elected and ex-officio members. The current Standing Commission has also fair geographical representation among elected members.

Work plan 2020–2022

The Standing Commission' work plan over the past two years was based on its statutory mandate and relevant resolutions of the Council of Delegates and the International Conference. To align with the aforementioned resolution on the composition of the Standing Commission and election of its members, the Standing Commission decided at the outset of its term to review its internal rules of procedure, after holding a workshop involving legal experts of the ICRC and the IFRC. This reform also aimed to strengthen the members' and the secretariat staff's compliance with their duties of integrity and confidentiality.

The work plan was also built on new decisions taken by the Standing Commission and the outcome of a few generative-thinking online workshops on specific issues held in addition to its regular meetings. These issues included the vision, objectives and strategy for upcoming statutory meetings of the Movement; effective Movement policy-making, monitoring, accountability and implementation; and the reform of the Movement awards, which was the continuation of work undertaken during the previous session of the Standing Commission.

An advisory group made up of representatives from National Societies, the ICRC and the IFRC was formed to advise the Standing Commission on the scope and content of the reform of the Movement awards. The resolution with the amendments would be submitted to the 2022 Council of Delegates.

Since the start of the current session, the Standing Commission has met eight times in ordinary meetings, most of which had to be held in virtual format owing to COVID-19-related public health measures and international travel restrictions. Despite the challenges stemming from being unable to meet in person for two full years, the Standing Commission was able to steer its course to fulfil its mandate and work, through shorter online meetings.

2) PREPARATION OF THE MOVEMENT'S STATUTORY MEETINGS

No sooner has one International Conference ended than another begins, triggering the next four-year preparatory cycle. The same applies to the Council of Delegates in a two-year superimposed cycle.

The Standing Commission started its work related to the statutory meetings with a review of the 2019 statutory meetings. Although COVID-19-related restrictions prevented an in-depth face-to-face workshop on this matter, a shorter, virtual round table session allowed the meeting organizers and Standing Commission members to exchange views and lessons learned and reflect on a report by the commissioner of the 33rd International Conference.

Preparing the 2022 Council of Delegates

A virtual workshop on the next round of statutory meetings was held in October 2020, which laid out the concept for the 2021 Council of Delegates (later postponed to June 2022), and a roadmap to and strategy for the 34th International Conference. The Standing Commission also outlined its **vision for the 2020–2023 statutory meetings**, found in the box below.

- The statutory meetings will reinforce the relevance, unity and collective strength of the Movement in addressing the most critical humanitarian issues at the global, regional and local levels.
- People will be at the centre of discussions and decisions, together with a commitment to ensure maximum implementation and impact.
- The Movement's ability to connect and work closely with affected populations and communities, as well as with States, donors, and international and local partners will be strengthened.
- The ever-changing environment in which the Movement operates will be harnessed to improve dialogue, transparency, accountability and mutual trust between members, observers, and the people served by the Movement.

In addition, the Standing Commission reaffirmed the relevance of the four general objectives it had established in 2016 to guide the preparation of the statutory meetings, namely to:

- contribute to the respect for and development of international humanitarian law, with the aim of better protecting people affected by armed conflicts
- improve the safety, security, health and dignity of individuals by strengthening legal frameworks and policies related to humanitarian action and promoting their effective implementation
- shape the global humanitarian agenda, raising the Movement's collective voice on pressing humanitarian concerns, grounded in its practical experience and principled approach to humanitarian action
- foster relationships, alliances and synergies among Movement components and between the Movement and governments and other humanitarian partners in order to increase the implementation and impact of previous and future International Conference outcomes.

The Standing Commission further agreed on a fifth objective, specific to the Council of Delegates, which is to:

- strengthen unity, cooperation and mutual trust among the Movement components and their collective impact on the people they serve, including by fostering coherent and effective positions, policies, strategies and action on humanitarian issues of common concern to the Movement.

Although the COVID-19 pandemic brought with it a whole host of challenges and had a range of consequences, the Standing Commission believed it could be used as a sort of stress test to check the Movement's relevance and agility in these challenging times. Accordingly, the Standing Commission chose the theme "**A Movement fit for purpose**" for the Council of Delegates, seeing it as an opportunity to examine the Movement's work from the two perspectives of "what we do" and "how we work". It was further noted that the Council of Delegates, which is held every two years, is the ideal forum for regular self-checks to ensure the Movement is on course to achieve its mission and objectives.

Postponing of the Council of Delegates

Given the uncertainty in the public health situation and the international travel restrictions continuing to result from the COVID-19 pandemic, the Standing Commission regularly discussed with the IFRC regarding the date of the Council of Delegates and the IFRC General Assembly. In April 2021, a communication was sent out, in close coordination with the IFRC, to announce the postponement of the Council of Delegates from its original date in December 2021. In November 2021, the Standing Commission and the IFRC announced simultaneously that the Council of Delegates and the IFRC General Assembly would be held in Geneva in June 2022. The Standing Commission hoped that everyone would understand the decision to relocate the Council of Delegates and the IFRC General Assembly from the original meeting venue in the Dominican Republic. It conveyed its deep gratitude to the leaders, volunteers and staff of the Dominican Red Cross for the perseverance and enthusiastic dedication they had shown in renewing their offer to host the Movement's statutory meetings after their postponement to 2022.

Designing the structure of the Council of Delegates in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic

In the process of deciding on the date for the Council of Delegates, the Standing Commission and the co-organizers, with the support of the Joint Organizing Committee, regularly explored ways of making the Council of Delegates work under the present constraints so that it fulfilled its statutory functions, but not just. Given the concern about the public health situation and the desire to reduce the meetings' environmental footprint, the Standing Commission limited the number of delegates in each delegation coming to Geneva. However, the various online forums held within the Movement in the preceding months proved a viable avenue for engaging a wider audience from National Societies around the world. Therefore, to keep up the momentum from the continuous consultation process, the Standing Commission approved the innovative approach of offering the Movement a "journey to the Council of Delegates" in the form of a programme of nine online workshops from January to May 2022. These workshops would supplement the Council of Delegates' agenda with exploratory presentations and discussions on issues that would not require decisions in 2022. The outcomes of the workshops would nonetheless be presented at the plenary meeting of the Council of Delegates and be reflected in its summary record. The Standing Commission hoped that these workshops would also provide new opportunities for National Societies' volunteers and staff to participate.

Way forward to the 34th International Conference

Along with the vision, objectives and strategy already endorsed by the Standing Commission (see above), the discussions held in the context of the Council of Delegates and the decisions taken will provide valuable input to guide the preparation of the 34th International Conference. The Standing Commission is nevertheless very keen to ensure that a robust process of engagement and consultation begins as soon as possible after the 2022 Council of Delegates with the components of the Movement and the States around the concept and priorities for the next International Conference. At the time of writing this report, the Standing Commission was engaged in the work of reflection and development of such a concept.

Implementing resolutions and reporting

On several occasions, the Standing Commission reiterated its **call to the members of the International Conference and of the Council of Delegates to “walk the talk” and fully implement all resolutions adopted and all pledges made in 2019**. This responsibility is an integral part of the new cycle of preparation for the next statutory meetings. It demonstrates that the commitments made are relevant and important and will help make a difference in future humanitarian crises.

The Standing Commission welcomed the launch in 2021 by the ICRC and IFRC of a new online reporting system on the resolutions and pledges of the 33rd International Conference. This user-friendly, flexible one-stop platform is supported by a dedicated page on the www.rcrcconference.org website. **Conference members are encouraged to use it to report their implementation and help make monitoring more effective.**

3) MOVEMENT AWARDS

The Standing Commission is mandated to administer the Movement’s two most prominent awards – the Henry Dunant Medal (the Movement’s highest distinction, created in 1965 and awarded every two years to individuals in the Movement to recognize their outstanding services and acts of great devotion), and the Red Cross and Red Crescent Prize for Peace and Humanity (instituted in 1987 and awarded every four years to either National Societies or individuals in the Movement for their active contribution to a more peaceful world).

In December 2020, the Standing Commission adopted [new guidelines for awarding the Medal and the Prize](#), with a view to supplementing the regulations of these two awards, particularly the provisions on the eligibility and desired qualities of nominees, the nomination process and the review and decision-making process. The new guidelines reflect, in particular, the Standing Commission’s commitment to fostering diversity and inclusion and upholding the highest standards of integrity and ethics. They encourage a gender-balanced representation among nominees, greater inclusion of nominees from all geographical regions and of all ages and the recognition of achievements in a variety of posts in leadership, operations, legal contexts, etc. in the Movement. The adoption of these new guidelines was greatly facilitated by a workshop held two months earlier, in addition to the regular discussions held during the Standing Commission’s meetings.

After adopting the guidelines, **the Standing Commission agreed to reform the two Movement awards and consider changes to their regulations** (of 1965 and 1987, respectively). It established an advisory group, with the member of the Standing Commission from the Cook Islands as chair and with representatives from the ICRC, the IFRC and five National Societies (Burundi, France, United Arab Emirates, Uruguay, Vanuatu) representing all geographical regions. The advisory group provided recommendations on the scope of reform and the content of the **draft resolution and revised regulations** to be submitted to the Council of Delegates in 2022.

Henry Dunant Medals 2021

The new, 2020 guidelines were in force when the Standing Commission launched its call for nominations for the 2021 Henry Dunant Medal. The guidelines served the Standing Commission well in its selection process. In October 2021, the Standing Commission decided to award the medal to [seven individuals](#) – two posthumously – for their outstanding achievements:

- Mohammed Al Maadheed, Qatar Red Crescent Society
- Philippe Gaillard, ICRC
- Tadateru Konoe, Japanese Red Cross Society
- Ligia Leroux de Ramirez, Dominican Red Cross (1937–2020, posthumously)

- Christine Lightbourne, Bahamas Red Cross Society
- Manuel Salazar Alvarez, Costa Rica Red Cross
- Ivan Usichenko, Ukrainian Red Cross Society (1938–2021, posthumously)

The Standing Commission congratulates the award recipients, their families and the organizations under which they have worked with such wholehearted dedication to help accomplish the Movement's humanitarian mission. It thanks all the nominating National Societies and their co-sponsors for nominating many highly qualified candidates with diverse backgrounds. The recipients of the 2021 Henry Dunant Medal will be honoured at the next Council of Delegates in June 2022.

4) PROMOTING HARMONY WITHIN THE MOVEMENT AND EXAMINING MATTERS OF COMMON CONCERN

The Standing Commission has striven, over the past two years, to promote harmonious collaboration and coordination among Movement members using whatever avenues were available in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic. At each of its working sessions, the Standing Commission received reports about important Movement processes and follow-up to selected resolutions.

Review of the Seville Agreement and Supplementary Measures to enhance the collective impact of the Movement

Following discussions and preliminary announcements at the 2019 Council of Delegates, the ICRC and IFRC announced to the Movement in February 2020 the establishment of a single and inclusive process to enhance the collective impact of the Movement, a process which would include a review of the Seville Agreement and its Supplementary Measures.² The Standing Commission welcomed the initiation of such an inclusive working process and recalled its special responsibility with regard to the implementation and review of the Seville Agreement.³ At each of its meetings, the Standing Commission received updates from its ICRC and IFRC members on the progress made and had the opportunity to engage in discussions and share advice and suggestions. In particular, the Standing Commission has regularly stressed the importance of better linking effective Movement coordination and collective impact with investment in National Societies that strengthens and sustains their local action.

From December 2020 to July 2021, the chair of the Standing Commission participated as an observer in the work of a Movement advisory group that involved representatives of a dozen National Societies contributing to the initial phase of the consultation process. It was worth recalling that the issues at stake in the discussion concerned all 194 components of the Movement – including the 192 National Societies in all the diversity of their local and international engagement, needs and capacities – and how their collective impact and mutual cooperation efforts would be shaped. In the first quarter of 2022, the chair was able to take part in a new round of consultations led by the ICRC and IFRC and open to all National Societies on more focused issues such as inclusive leadership and coordination of the Movement's international response, mutually supportive communications and positioning, consistent investment and coordinated support to National Societies, and enhancing the Movement's resource mobilization potential. The outcome of these consultations should inform a drafting group, which was tasked with developing proposals for the 2022 Council of Delegates to revise and strengthen the Seville Agreement and Supplementary Measures by

² Agreement on the Organization of the International Activities of the Components of the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement ("Seville Agreement", Resolution 6 of the 1997 Council of Delegates) and the Supplementary Measures to Enhance the Implementation of the Seville Agreement (Resolution 8 of the 2005 Council of Delegates)

³ Article 10 of the Seville Agreement

clarifying, amending or further supplementing their provisions. At the time of writing this report, the drafting process was still underway.

Implementation of the statement on integrity of the Movement

“The integrity and ethical behaviour of each component of the Movement, at an individual level as well as at an institutional level, is of paramount importance to the Movement as a whole.” Thus begins the “Statement on integrity of the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement”, adopted by the Council of Delegates on 8 December 2019 and reflecting a desire to ensure integrity and ethical behaviour. The Standing Commission warmly welcomed the adoption of this statement, whose development it had initiated during its previous session. At each of its meetings, the Standing Commission received updates on efforts to implement and monitor the improved approach to integrity throughout the Movement in line with the statement.

From July 2021, the Standing Commission’s vice-chair took part as an observer in a working group facilitating the follow-up to the statement. The group was set up by the IFRC and the ICRC and made up of representatives of around a dozen National Societies. It will present a progress report to the June 2022 Council of Delegates, including on the implementation of its action plan, the workshops it has organized with National Societies, and its other initiatives to promote and develop the statement and foster dialogue around it.

Memorandum of Understanding between Magen David Adom in Israel and the Palestine Red Crescent Society

At its meetings, the Standing Commission received regular updates on the implementation of the Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) and the Agreement on Operational Arrangements (AOA) dated 28 November 2005 between Magen David Adom and the Palestine Red Crescent Society. The Standing Commission particularly regretted the constraints observed in the last two years to achieving tangible results on Resolution 10 of the 2019 Council of Delegates and on the implementation of the MoU and AOA. It urged all parties concerned to undertake all necessary efforts to achieve rapid and significant progress. For more information, see the report of the independent monitor to the 2022 Council of Delegates.

Effective Movement policymaking

Following on from reflections during its previous session on the challenges of ensuring effective and resilient governance, integrity and compliance, the Standing Commission wanted to explore further ways that the Movement could achieve more effective policy-making, monitoring, accountability and compliance. With the assistance of a volunteer, the Standing Commission has begun mapping Movement policy instruments and developing a glossary with short descriptions. At a workshop attended by members of the Standing Commission and by the chair of the ICRC–IFRC Joint Statutes Commission, the chair of the IFRC Compliance and Mediation Committee, and experts from the ICRC and IFRC, the discussion highlighted a number of challenges regarding the preparation, monitoring, knowledge and life cycle of Movement resolutions and policies as well as regarding access to them, accountability for them and compliance with them. Various suggestions were made that could significantly contribute to efforts to improve the Movement’s policy-making framework; the understanding, coherence and impact of Movement policies; and the integrity of Movement components. The Standing Commission was keen to continue its work on these issues of particular interest to the Movement.

5) FINANCIAL AND ADMINISTRATIVE MATTERS

The Standing Commission expresses its profound appreciation to the ICRC, the IFRC and donor National Societies for their indispensable financial support, which enabled it to fulfil its mandate and functions. It again thanks the ICRC for hosting the office of its secretariat.

The 2020 and 2021 budgets were scaled down, respectively, to 462,000 Swiss francs and 482,000 Swiss francs in view of decreased expenditures in the context of COVID-19. For these two years, the Standing Commission's budgets were successfully covered by National Societies, the IFRC and the ICRC each providing one-third, in accordance with the 2007 Council of Delegates resolution governing the financing of the Standing Commission.

The Standing Commission reaffirmed its decision to conduct financial reviews each year: the reviews for the first three years of the session would be conducted internally, while the last would be carried out by a recognized external audit service to guarantee the financial statements' compliance with the International Standard on Review Engagements 2400 (ISRE 2400).

The Standing Commission reiterates its deep gratitude to the National Societies of the following countries, which contributed generously, despite the ongoing pandemic, to the budget of the Standing Commission for 2020 and/or 2021:

Albania	Estonia	Morocco
Andorra	Ethiopia	Netherlands
Australia	Finland	New Zealand
Austria	France	Niger
Bahamas	Germany	Norway
Bahrain	Greece	Palestine
Belgium	Honduras	Poland
Bolivia	Iraq	Portugal
Bulgaria	Ireland	Qatar
Cambodia	Israel	Romania
Canada	Italy	South Sudan
Chile	Japan	Spain
China	Jordan	Sweden
Cook Islands	Korea, Republic of	Thailand
Costa Rica	Kuwait	Tonga
Croatia	Liechtenstein	Turkey
Cyprus	Mexico	United Arab Emirates
Czech Republic	Monaco	United Kingdom
Denmark	Montenegro	