



Power of humanity

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

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Extension of the Restoring Family Links Strategy for the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement 2020–2030

DRAFT ELEMENTS OF RESOLUTION

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Document prepared by the International Committee of the Red Cross in cooperation with the RFL Leadership Platform and the RFL Strategy Implementation Group (35 National Societies and the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies)

DRAFT ELEMENTS OF RESOLUTION

Extension of the Restoring Family Links Strategy for the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement 2020–2030

BACKGROUND

The draft elements of the proposed resolution on the Extension of the Restoring Family Links Strategy for the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement 2020–2030 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 to 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

Hundreds of thousands of people around the world are missing or separated from their families as a result of armed conflicts, disasters and other emergencies, as well as in the context of migration. This represents a global humanitarian tragedy on a large scale and the figures do not convey the true extent of the issue or the suffering of each and every family.

Restoring Family Links (RFL) covers a broad spectrum of services provided by the Red Cross and Red Crescent Family Links Network, including preventing family separation, maintaining family contact, restoring family links, tracing and providing answers to families on the fate and whereabouts of their loved ones, and supporting families.

With more than a hundred years of experience and expertise in this domain, the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement (Movement) is best placed to deliver this humanitarian service. The Movement's unique global network, which crosses borders and continents and is rooted in communities around the world, is demonstrated through the delivery of this core service.

Even though we are living in a world that is more connected than ever, with exponentially growing internet access, mobile phone penetration and social media use, the number of missing persons registered by the Red Cross and Red Crescent Family Links Network continues to increase.¹ The RFL services provided by the Movement remain relevant and critical in many contexts.

At the 2019 Council of Delegates, the Movement adopted its second RFL strategy for the years 2020 to 2025 in Resolution 6, “Restoring Family Links: Strategy for the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement 2020–2025” (RFL Strategy), which was preceded by a broad consultation on the substance of the strategy at regional Movement meetings in all continents between 2016 and 2018.

As the end of the current strategy approaches, it is acknowledged that the RFL Strategy 2020–2025 is still relevant in terms of its objectives and substance. The implementation of the strategy was slowed down and delayed because of the impact of COVID in the years 2020–2022 and the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC)/Central Tracing Agency (CTA) data breach in 2022, which directly affected the RFL services of the Family Links Network. It would therefore be counterproductive to force a stop or to implement the strategy superficially simply because of the 2025 deadline.

Additionally, a Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) framework for the RFL Strategy was developed by the RFL Strategy Implementation Group² during 2020, which, since then, has served as a good and solid basis for the Movement to monitor progress on the objectives and enablers of the strategy. A baseline of indicators was established for the year 2020 and, since then, the Movement has been able to monitor its implementation, globally and by region. Furthermore, the Regional Plans of Action that were developed for the implementation of the RFL Strategy serve as a sound basis for continuing to monitor progress, and they can be adjusted for the period until 2030 to reflect implementation priorities.

Finally, the importance of synergies between the operationalization of the RFL Strategy and the forthcoming and anticipated adoption of the first-ever Movement Migration Strategy 2025–2030 is recognized, and with the RFL Strategy being extended until 2030, both strategies would therefore end at the same time.

Consultations on extending the current strategy took place at the RFL Leadership Platform and with the RFL Strategy Implementation Group between February and March 2023.

Preambular paragraphs (PP)

PP 1:

The first preambular paragraph of this resolution could *express deep concern* about the suffering endured by those who have lost contact with, have no news of or are separated from their loved ones as a result of armed conflicts, disasters and other emergencies, as well as in the context of migration, and *reaffirm* the Movement’s unique position to address their needs and its commitment to minimize their suffering.

Rationale:

Family separation and missing family members as a result of armed conflicts, disasters and other emergencies, as well as in the context of migration, remains a global humanitarian

¹ The number of new cases registered by the Family Links Network since 2019 continues to increase on a yearly basis. By 2022, more than 195,000 missing persons were registered with the Family Links Network around the world.

² The RFL Strategy Implementation Group is chaired by the Central Tracing Agency and comprises 35 National Societies, the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC) and the ICRC.

tragedy. The RFL services provided by the Movement have a crucial role to play in alleviating the suffering of separated families and families of the missing. We have a unique position with our Family Links Network to meet the evergrowing significant humanitarian needs where no other actors can play this role, hence the need for all components of the Movement to come together in order to ensure success. RFL lies at the origin of the Movement and at the heart of the work of its components. RFL is the embodiment of the principle of humanity, and it is in this domain that the unique character of the Movement's global network is truly demonstrated. Every year, hundreds of thousands of people benefit from the Movement's RFL services.

PP 2:

The second preambular paragraph could *recall* Resolution 6 of the 2019 Council of Delegates on the adoption of the RFL Strategy 2020–2025, and *take note of* the achievements made during its implementation.

Rationale:

The Movement has started to implement its second RFL Strategy. The results of the implementation have shown progress while recognizing that further efforts are required to strengthen the capacity of the Family Links Network to assist people who are without news of or separated from members of their families and while acknowledging the need to deliver RFL within a broader framework of Movement protection activities.

PP 3:

The third preambular paragraph could *recall* the respective and complementary mandates, roles and responsibilities of the components of the Movement.

Rationale:

The basis for the mandates, roles and responsibilities of the components of the Movement lies notably in the Statutes of the Movement and the resolutions of the International Conference of the Red Cross and Red Crescent and the Movement Coordination for Collective Impact Agreement (Seville Agreement 2.0), including the role of the ICRC's Central Tracing Agency and the auxiliary role of National Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (National Societies) in providing support to their respective public authorities in the humanitarian field.

PP 4:

The fourth preambular paragraph could *highlight* the need to ensure complementarity and synergies between the RFL Strategy, with its extension until 2030, and the forthcoming Movement Migration Strategy 2025–2030.

Rationale:

Resolution 9 of the 2022 Council of Delegates, "Towards a Movement strategy on migration", highlighted the need to ensure complementarity and synergies between the Movement's future migration strategy and the RFL Strategy 2020–2025. It is foreseen that the Movement will have its first-ever migration strategy for the period 2025–2030. The extension of the RFL Strategy to 2030 would coincide with the end of the Movement Migration Strategy, ensuring complementary processes.

The purpose of this paragraph is also to highlight the importance of synergies between the RFL and migration workstreams, which will maximize the Movement's collective impact and coordination when implementing the two strategies through their respective platforms at leadership and technical levels.

Operative paragraphs (OP)

OP 1:

The first operative paragraph could *adopt* the extension until 2030 of the Restoring Family Links: Strategy for the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement 2020–2025.

Rationale:

The extension until 2030 of the RFL Strategy 2020–2025 by the Movement is the primary purpose of the resolution.

OP 2:

The second operative paragraph could *encourage* all components of the Movement, in accordance with their mandates and roles, to support one another's efforts in implementing the strategy, and *continue to encourage* the resourcing of RFL and the development of partnerships among National Societies so that they can support each other in building their RFL capacities.

Rationale:

It is essential for all components of the Movement to continue to integrate the implementation of the strategy into their own plans. Mobilizing resources for RFL has been a long-standing issue and it is important to call for resources to be allocated by all components as an essential step in continuing to successfully implement the strategy. Efforts to strengthen RFL capacities must be integrated into broader National Society Development led by the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC), thereby making close cooperation between the ICRC and the IFRC essential. At the same time, peer-to-peer support is often the most effective way to strengthen capacity, and the need for solidarity is more evident than in any other service provided by the Movement, since the effectiveness of each National Society's RFL service is dependent on the response capacity of other National Societies. All components of the Movement must therefore come together to successfully implement the strategy.

OP 3:

The third operative paragraph could *commend* the work undertaken by the RFL Strategy Implementation Group for the purpose of supporting and monitoring the implementation of the RFL Strategy, and *encourage* it to continue to pursue its efforts.

Rationale:

The RFL Implementation Group, chaired by the ICRC, has supported the process of monitoring the implementation of the RFL Strategy 2020–2025. It has proved to be a useful mechanism for helping to ensure that the strategy is implemented at both global and regional levels. In their role as ambassadors of the strategy, the group's members have helped raise awareness of the strategy and developed a comprehensive M&E framework, including the development of Regional Action Plans to implement the strategy.

OP 4:

The fourth operative paragraph could *commend* the work undertaken by the Application Group for the RFL Code of Conduct on Data Protection, *encourage* it to continue to support the application of the RFL Code of Conduct on Data Protection, and *call upon* the components of the Movement to continue to provide expertise and resources in this area.

Rationale:

The Movement processes personal data under the framework set out in the RFL Code of Conduct on Data Protection, which was welcomed by the 2017 Council of Delegates resolution on RFL and the 2019 International Conference resolution as an appropriate foundation for personal data protection. It is a crucial tool to ensure that the transfer and processing of personal data, which is the core business of RFL, will continue to be possible for the Family Links Network. To this end, it is, however, essential for the provisions of the RFL Code of

Conduct on Data Protection to be implemented, with the support of the Application Group. For effective implementation, expertise and resources will continue to be needed by the Movement's components. The data breach at the CTA reminded the Movement that protecting people also means protecting their data and that there are serious implications for not doing so, jeopardizing their trust in the Movement and the reputation of the Movement's services.

OP 5:

The fifth operative paragraph could *invite* the RFL Leadership Platform to continue to address critical issues for the future of RFL services, and *steer* the ongoing implementation of the RFL Strategy.

Rationale:

The RFL Leadership Platform was established on the basis of the RFL Resolution adopted by the 2017 Council of Delegates as a means of engaging senior leaders within the Movement and providing more opportunities for participatory leadership in the Family Links Network's RFL services. The RFL Leadership Platform met 14 times up until 2023 and has been addressing long-standing systemic issues for RFL, such as ownership of RFL as a National Society core service, RFL capacity-strengthening, resource mobilization, synergies between National Societies and humanitarian diplomacy for RFL.

OP 6:

The sixth operative paragraph could *invite* components of the Movement to report to the 2028 Council of Delegates on the results achieved in implementing the RFL Strategy and the RFL Code of Conduct on Data Protection.

Rationale:

With the mechanisms mentioned in OP3, OP4 and OP5, the Movement is well equipped to ensure that the RFL Strategy and the RFL Code of Conduct on Data Protection are meaningfully implemented until 2030. Accountability to the Council of Delegates is required to demonstrate the results of implementing the strategy after an additional five years, including possible adjustments that might be required, such as exploring new ways of strengthening its implementation.