



## Power of humanity

34th International Conference  
of the Red Cross and Red Crescent

28–31 October 2024, Geneva

### OUTLINE OF COMMISSION II AND ITS SPOTLIGHT SESSIONS

#### **Standing by our Fundamental Principles in responding to humanitarian needs and risks**

**30 October 2024**

##### **Context**

In the context of the current global crises and the various threats to principled humanitarian action, it is prudent and timely to focus on the continued importance of the Fundamental Principles for the humanitarian activities of the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement (Movement). This Commission will allow us to engage in discussion with States and Movement components to explore the practical implications and dangers of non-compliance with the Fundamental Principles in different contexts, including in conflicts, climate events, migration-related activities and situations involving digital risks. It will highlight the role of States in working with the Movement components to ensure respect for the Fundamental Principles and take action to curtail activities that are contrary to the Fundamental Principles and put humanitarian actors and the communities they serve at risk.

The Commission aims to expand on and bring to life the topic of respect for principled humanitarian action – the subject of a Council of Delegates resolution – and includes a call to States that will be presented at the opening plenary session. The Commission will also address humanitarian needs and action and consider current and emerging risks. It will explore them through the lens of principled action and the Fundamental Principles, discussing challenges and developing solutions.

##### **Overall objective and expected outcomes**

The overall objective of Commission II is to reaffirm the continued value of the Fundamental Principles and to deliberate on threats to humanitarian work carried out in accordance with these principles. The Commission will also discuss the role of States in respecting and ensuring respect for the Movement's principled humanitarian action. Expected outcomes include:

- Refreshed commitment to the Fundamental Principles and reaffirmation of their continued relevance in a changing world
- Greater understanding among States of the threats to the Movement's principled humanitarian action and the very real consequences on the ground.

##### **Format**

Commission II will consist of an opening and closing plenary session and four spotlight sessions on the following topics:

- Respect for Neutral, Impartial and Independent humanitarian action

- Working together to reduce the impacts of climate change on communities
- Navigating pressing challenges in the context of migration: The importance of a principled humanitarian approach
- Raising awareness about emerging challenges: Humanitarian protection risks in an increasingly digitalized world.

The opening plenary will commence with an introduction to the overall theme of the Commission, following which the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) and the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC) will deliver the Appeal to States endorsed through the Council of Delegates resolution “Call for respect and support for principled humanitarian action”. The plenary session will also include an introduction to the spotlight sessions to be held during the day.

## **Description of the spotlight sessions**

### **Session 1: Respect for Neutral, Impartial and Independent Humanitarian Action**

Wednesday 30 October, morning

#### **Objective**

Across the world, we see increasing challenges to principled humanitarian action. These include political and societal polarization, the politicization of humanitarian assistance, and misinformation and disinformation, which threaten the safety of humanitarian workers and their access to the communities they serve. Respect for principled humanitarian action is imperative to conducting our humanitarian work effectively and core to gaining and maintaining the acceptance and trust of the people and communities we serve, including in sensitive and insecure contexts.

This spotlight session will bring the Movement and States together to explore operational examples of the current global challenges to principled humanitarian action and the real-life consequences for the Movement’s staff and volunteers. It will highlight why humanitarian action in accordance with the Fundamental Principles is important both for the Movement and for States. It will also explore the important role of States and the Movement in working to counter these threats so that the Movement components can work everywhere, effectively and safely.

#### **Key questions to be discussed**

1. What are the new challenges faced by the Movement in implementing its mission, vision and mandate in accordance with the Fundamental Principles and what are the implications for the Movement components, including volunteers, and affected people?
2. Why is respecting the Fundamental Principles, particularly Impartiality, Neutrality and Independence, so crucial to the Movement components in their response to humanitarian needs and risks, in particular, in situations of armed conflict, protracted crises and other polarized contexts?
3. Why is it important for States that the Movement components act in accordance with their Fundamental Principles at all times?
4. How can States/governments/public authorities reinforce, support and facilitate respect for the Fundamental Principles and principled humanitarian action in their respective contexts?
5. How can the Movement components effectively engage with different stakeholders (such as public authorities, non-State actors, Movement leaders, staff and volunteers) to improve respect for the Fundamental Principles?

### Supporting resources

- [Background report to the 32nd International Conference \(2015\) “The Fundamental Principles in action: A unique ethical, operational and institutional framework”](#)
- [2024 Council of Delegates resolution “Call for respect and support for principled humanitarian action”](#)
- [Report on the Workshop on the Fundamental Principles, 2013 Council of Delegates](#)
- [It's all relative: The origins, legal character and normative content of the humanitarian principles | International Review of the Red Cross | Cambridge Core](#)
- [Imperfect relief: Challenges to the impartiality and identity of humanitarian action | International Review of the Red Cross | Cambridge Core](#)

## Session 2: Working together to reduce the impacts of climate change on communities

Wednesday 30 October, morning

### Objective

The overarching aim of this session is to reflect on the “big shifts” that have been achieved in recognizing the humanitarian impacts of climate change and to inspire participants to work together to scale up climate action with a view to reducing the impacts on people and communities.

More specifically, the objectives include the following:

- Enhance understanding of the Movement’s role in climate action
- Encourage States to reflect on putting commitments into practice (noting recent developments such as the COP28 Declaration on Climate, Relief Recovery and Peace, EW4All and the REAP Getting Ahead of Disasters: A Charter on Finance for Managing Risks) and to support the Climate and Environment Charter for Humanitarian Organizations
- Promote further endorsement of the Climate and Environment Charter by National Societies
- Create an enabling environment for action and commitments from States and National Society leadership.

### Key questions to be discussed

1. How do the Fundamental Principles relate to climate action by the Movement?
2. What are some key examples of the Movement’s transformative progress on climate action?
3. Where do opportunities lie to address gaps and increase our ambitions (as a Movement and a sector)? What are the key enablers for stronger action?

### Supporting resources

- [COP28 Declaration on Climate, Relief, Recovery and Peace](#)
- [Movement climate ambitions 2020](#)
- [Climate and environment](#)
- [The Climate and Environment Charter for Humanitarian Organizations](#)
- [Disaster Risk Governance Guidelines: Strengthening Laws, Policies and Plans for Comprehensive Disaster Risk Management](#)

## Session 3: Navigating pressing challenges in the context of migration: The importance of a principled humanitarian approach

Wednesday 30 October, afternoon

### Objective

Migration is a complex and multifaceted phenomenon that has become increasingly contentious, both socially and politically. Recent years have witnessed growing xenophobia, the rise of anti-migrant narratives and the hardening of migration laws and policies aimed at increased border securitization and containment. This has led to heightened humanitarian needs, stigma and discrimination against many migrants, including refugees, undermining their safety, dignity and rights. There is also an increased risk of humanitarian action in support of migrants being politicized or perceived to be political.

This spotlight session will bring together the Movement and States Parties to the Geneva Conventions to address pressing global humanitarian challenges in the context of migration. These are issues that demand attention, understanding and cooperation within the Movement and with States. With a focus on the Fundamental Principles, which guide our humanitarian action, and taking the opportunity presented by the adoption of the first-ever Movement Migration Strategy by the 2024 Council of Delegates, the session aims to enhance collective commitments and action to assist and protect migrants and their families and communities.

### Key questions to be discussed

1. How can the Movement and States address pressing issues impacting the safety and dignity of migrants, including refugees?  
Dialogue on pressing issues that are affecting the safe and dignified access of migrants to humanitarian assistance, including barriers to principled humanitarian action for migrants. The session will explore the pressing needs of migrants, including the need for safety, dignity and essential support, issues associated with family separation and disappearance along migration routes and evolving issues connected to climate-related mobility.
2. How can the first-ever Movement Migration Strategy enhance principled humanitarian action for migrants, including refugees?  
Highlighting the first-ever Movement Migration Strategy, the added value of the Movement's contribution to addressing migration-related humanitarian needs and the pivotal role of States, including donor States and those facilitating operational access, in supporting it. Upholding the Fundamental Principles, especially Impartiality and Neutrality, will be essential for effective implementation.
3. How can States and the Movement reaffirm and implement the commitments set out in the resolution on migration adopted at the 31st International Conference of the Red Cross and Red Crescent in 2011, including by establishing laws and procedures that ensure that National Societies have safe and effective access to all migrants, regardless of their status?  
Recalling the commitments outlined in the 2011 resolution on migration, which emphasize, in particular, the importance of States establishing enabling laws and procedures to facilitate safe and effective access by National Societies to all migrants, regardless of their status, based on the Fundamental Principles and the Movement's mission.

### Supporting resources

- [31IC resolution \(2011\) "Migration: Ensuring access, dignity, respect for diversity and social inclusion"](#)
- [2019 CoD resolution "Adopting a Movement Statement on Migrants and our Common Humanity"](#)
- [2022 CoD resolution "Towards a Movement strategy on migration"](#)

- [2024 CoD resolution “Migration Strategy for the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement 2024–2030”](#)
- [IFRC Policy on Migration 2009](#)
- [Global Migration Lab \(2022\). Migrants’ Perspectives: Building Trust in Humanitarian Action \(EN, AR, FR, SP\)](#)

## **Session 4: Raising awareness about emerging challenges: Humanitarian protection risks in an increasingly digitalized world**

Wednesday 30 October, afternoon

### **Objective**

This spotlight session aims to raise the awareness of Movement partners and improve their understanding of digitally derived protection risks in humanitarian contexts, including armed conflict and other situations of violence, natural disasters, migration and other humanitarian settings. It will explore how digital technology can exacerbate the existing vulnerabilities of affected people and lead to humanitarian consequences. The session will also unpack the potential role of the Movement in mitigating these risks as part of its broader protection mandate and explore some of the following key ideas.

**The challenges of harmful information in the digital age:** Harmful information, such as misinformation, disinformation and hate speech, can spread across multiple platforms and influence people’s beliefs and behaviours, raising tensions, fostering distrust and spreading hatred online and offline. This can trigger violence against individuals and communities, especially those who are already discriminated and marginalized. Harmful information can also undermine trust in humanitarian actors and public authorities and contribute to polarizing societies and exacerbating social divisions.

**The risks and opportunities of artificial intelligence (AI) systems and tools:** AI systems and tools can have both positive and negative impacts on humanitarian action, depending on how they are designed, deployed and used. The reliance on AI for certain functions might lead to loss of human control, autonomy, accountability or oversight. The loss of human judgement in decisions that concern important values and in life-impacting assessments can have serious consequences, for example, when AI is used to inform decisions regarding social welfare policy, asylum or the use of force by the authorities. On the other hand, AI systems can also help humanitarian actors to optimize the delivery of aid and humanitarian action and to listen and respond to people’s needs and concerns.

**The disruption and targeting of digital infrastructure, services and data:** Cyber operations can, intentionally or unintentionally, destabilize and damage industrial facilities, communication networks and other services in ways that can cause harm, injury or death to individuals or limit their access to essential services. In an age in which people rely heavily on connectivity and digital tools, disrupting access to the internet and communication has become a recurrent practice. Such shutdowns can create or exacerbate protection risks with potentially life-threatening consequences. People, including humanitarians, may also be targeted using digital technologies that put them at risk, such as spyware and malware, or be affected by data breaches.

**Enabling the involvement of civilians in armed conflict through digital means:** The use of digital technologies provides several new ways in which civilians – on their own initiative or facilitated by parties to armed conflicts – can conduct conflict-related digital operations. For example, civilian hackers conduct cyber operations against perceived “enemies”, tech companies provide a growing number of services and infrastructure to belligerents and civilians

are encouraged to collect digital information for armed forces. This new development is putting civilians and civilian infrastructure at risk of being targeted or harmed.

### **Key questions to be discussed**

1. How can respect for the Fundamental Principles of Humanity, Impartiality, Neutrality and Independence be ensured when relying on digital solutions and services and using technology in operational responses?
2. How prepared are humanitarian actors to detect, assess and respond to digitally enabled protection risks? What are the most immediate needs to be addressed to improve preparedness and the delivery of relevant humanitarian action?
3. What opportunities are there to foster the resilience of the people we serve and raise their awareness of the digital risks they face?

### **Supporting resources**

- [\*Understanding digital risks in armed conflict \(ICRC Humanitarian Law & Policy Blog\)\*](#)
- [\*Protecting civilians against digital threats: four worrying trends and recommendations to address them \(ICRC Humanitarian Law & Policy Blog\)\*](#)
- [\*'Back to basics' with a digital twist: humanitarian principles and dilemmas in the digital age \(ICRC Humanitarian Law & Policy Blog\)\*](#)
- [\*Misinformation, disinformation and hate speech – Questions and answers \(ICRC\)\*](#)
- [\*Global Advisory Board on digital threats during conflict \(ICRC\)\*](#)