



## Power of humanity

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

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# Work of the Standing Commission 2022–2024, including the Movement Policy Framework Initiative

PROGRESS REPORT

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## PROGRESS REPORT

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### EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In June 2022, the Council of Delegates decided to postpone the 34th International Conference of the Red Cross and Red Crescent (International Conference) to October 2024 owing to various delays caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. Since then, the Standing Commission of the Red Cross and Red Crescent (Standing Commission) has devoted much of its attention to preparing for the 2024 statutory meetings of the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement (Movement) with the support of the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) and the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC), as co-hosts in charge of organizing the meetings.

This work has included preparing a series of consultations, starting in early 2023, on the concepts, agendas and expected outcomes for the 2024 statutory meetings, as well as participation in a number of briefings, regional conferences, webinars, etc., leading up to the International Conference preparatory meeting on 6–7 May 2024 in Geneva. The feedback received provided a solid basis for consolidating the official working documents approved by the Standing Commission in August 2024.

During the 2022–2024 period, the work of the Standing Commission also focused on the following areas:

- promoting harmony, cooperation and coordination within the Movement and examining matters of common interest, including by encouraging the implementation of commitments made under the Movement Coordination for Collective Impact Agreement of 2022 (Seville Agreement 2.0) and the 2019 “Statement on integrity of the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement”
- administering the Movement awards, including awarding four Henry Dunant Medals in 2024.

This report also highlights the Standing Commission’s initiative to develop a Movement policy framework. It outlines the work accomplished so far and associated projects that will be continued or launched through 2026 with the support of the Movement’s components.

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

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

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.

## **Attacks on Red Cross and Red Crescent volunteers and staff while protected by the emblems**

The Standing Commission is deeply alarmed by the upsurge, since 2022, of incidents in which humanitarian workers and others under the protection of the emblems have been targeted during armed conflict and other violence. Sharing its grief for the volunteers and staff who have been killed or injured in the line of duty while rescuing and assisting victims of violence, the Standing Commission reiterated its calls to protect humanitarian workers and medical personnel at all times, to respect the protective emblems and to uphold neutral and impartial humanitarian action.

## **Meetings, communication and representation**

Since June 2022, the Standing Commission has met eight times in ordinary meetings, two of which were held virtually. It also set up an internal working group on the creation of a Movement policy framework, which has met four times since early 2023 (see section 4). It held a workshop in June 2023 to examine issues arising from the Movement's Statutes and Rules of Procedure. The Standing Commission has continued to communicate with the Movement and members of the statutory meetings through its website and the five bulletins published since 2022.

The Standing Commission participated in a number of global, regional and thematic meetings (including the extraordinary session of the IFRC General Assembly and meetings of the IFRC Governing Board, the Inter-American Red Cross Conference, the Asia Pacific Regional Conference, the Mediterranean Conference, the General Assembly of the Arab Red Crescent and Red Cross Organization, the IFRC's Leadership Meeting for Central European and Central Asian National Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, and the Annual Meeting of National Society Legal Advisers) as well as several networks (including GLOW Red, RED VIWO and IFRC alumni) and other National Society events.

## **Enhancing the Standing Commission's Rules of Procedure and integrity framework**

Following the adoption by the Movement of new guidelines for candidates for election to the Standing Commission in 2019,<sup>1</sup> the Standing Commission carried out an in-depth review of its internal Rules of Procedure in 2020, in particular to ensure their alignment with the guidelines and the provisions concerning the integrity of its members. In view of the transition to its next session in late 2024 and the Movement's sharper standards on matters of integrity and accountability, the Standing Commission is committed to learning from its practice and further enhancing its own integrity framework.

## **Change in membership**

The Standing Commission comprises nine members, including five members from National Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (National Societies) who are elected by the International Conference, and four *ex officio* members representing the ICRC and IFRC. The latter four changed in 2022 and 2023: the Standing Commission was delighted to welcome the new presidents of the ICRC and IFRC, Ms Mirjana Spoljaric and Ms Kate Forbes, as well as Mr Olivier Ray, the ICRC's director of Mobilization, Movement and Partnerships, and Mr Jagan Chapagain, the IFRC's secretary-general. The Standing Commission expresses its heartfelt gratitude to their predecessors, Mr Peter Maurer, Mr Francesco Rocca, Ms Katrin Wiegmann and Ms Niamh Lawless, as well as to Dr Abbas Gullet, on leave since August 2023, for their commitment to the Standing Commission over the past years.

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<sup>1</sup> Resolution 4 of the 2019 Council of Delegates (CD/19/R4).

## 2) PREPARATION OF THE MOVEMENT'S STATUTORY MEETINGS

Following the postponement of the Council of Delegates and the IFRC General Assembly to 2022 due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the Standing Commission decided also to postpone the 34th International Conference and the preceding Council of Delegates to 2024, to allow sufficient time for thorough preparation and quality engagement with components of the Movement and states party to the Geneva Conventions.

In its 2022 report, the Standing Commission outlined its vision and general objectives for the 2019–2023 statutory meetings (since extended to 2024).<sup>2</sup> Over the past two years, the Standing Commission has worked intensely with the ICRC and IFRC in their capacity as co-organizers of the meetings. Special emphasis was placed on engagement ahead of the International Conference in order to have a relevant and impactful agenda and resolutions, with the aim of alleviating human suffering, protecting life and health, and upholding human dignity, especially during armed conflicts and other emergencies.

Throughout this period, the Standing Commission provided guidance on, reviewed and approved various iterations of conceptual documents, draft agendas and expected outcomes prepared by the co-organizers. This work formed the basis for wide-ranging consultations with members and led to the dispatch, in April 2024, of convocations and draft provisional agendas and programmes. In September 2024, official working documents were released, including **five draft resolutions for the 34th International Conference** and **seven draft resolutions for the Council of Delegates**, as well as a number of progress reports on the implementation of previous resolutions.

### Preparing the 34th International Conference

The preparatory process helped to identify three main focus areas for discussion and decision-making at the 34th International Conference, namely:

1. **building a global culture of respect for IHL**, to reaffirm the relevance of and global commitment to IHL as a means of protecting people affected by armed conflict on the 75th anniversary of the four Geneva Conventions
2. **standing by our Fundamental Principles in responding to humanitarian needs and risks**, to emphasize the Movement's distinctive role and the centrality of the principles of humanity, impartiality, neutrality and independence as the basis for effective humanitarian action
3. **enabling sustainable, locally led action**, to highlight the benefits of increased international and domestic investment in local leadership, ownership and action related to humanitarian activities.

The Standing Commission was closely associated with intensive consultations between the co-organizers and National Societies and states in 2023 and 2024, which took the form of exchanges of documents and comments, webinars, special sessions in many regional and thematic Movement and IFRC forums, ambassadors' meetings, briefings with permanent missions in Geneva and small-state missions in New York, etc. A key milestone was the organization of a preparatory meeting in Geneva on 6–7 May 2024 open to all members of the International Conference, in a repeat of a successful practice established by the Standing Commission in 2019. The preparatory meeting gave a large number of participants the chance to speak and allowed for the identification of areas of broad agreement and issues requiring clarification in the recently circulated zero draft resolutions; the aim was to lay the groundwork for broad consensus and, if possible, lighten the workload of the drafting committee during the International Conference.

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<sup>2</sup> Progress report on the work of the Standing Commission 2020–2022 ([CD/22/27](#)).

As usual, the Standing Commission remained attentive to decisions it had to take concerning the invitation of observers and guests, the designation of conference officers, and pledges and side events to be included in the programme. The Standing Commission is particularly grateful to the authorities of Switzerland, the host state, for their strong and generous support, as well as the chair designate and secretary-general designate of the International Conference, for their invaluable contributions.

To learn more, please visit the [34th International Conference web page](#).

### **Preparing the 2024 Council of Delegates**

The participative preparatory process for the International Conference also allowed National Societies to be consulted on most of the draft resolutions submitted to the Council of Delegates. In addition, a number of topic-specific steering, expert and advisory groups played a decisive role in preparing and consolidating the related resolutions and following up on previous resolutions.

To learn more, please visit the [2024 Council of Delegates web page](#).

### **3) PROMOTING HARMONY WITHIN THE MOVEMENT, EXAMINING MATTERS OF COMMON CONCERN AND FURTHERING IMPLEMENTATION OF RESOLUTIONS**

The annual joint messages from the Standing Commission, ICRC and IFRC to mark World Red Cross and Red Crescent Day, issued every 8 May since 2021, have served to celebrate unity across the Movement and the extraordinary commitment of its millions of volunteers and staff. On occasion, the Standing Commission has been called upon to examine issues affecting harmony within the Movement, sometimes striving to help address those issues and encourage dialogue among stakeholders. At most of its meetings, the Standing Commission received reports and discussed follow-up on decisions, processes and issues affecting harmony, cooperation and integrity within the Movement, including, but not limited to, the following matters.

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

The Standing Commission deeply regretted the lack of progress, not only in implementing the Memorandum of Understanding but also in establishing the mechanisms it contains for facilitating dialogue between the two parties. While regularly calling for more significant progress, the Standing Commission also noted that prospects for success were made even more uncertain by the resurgence of conflict and violence since October 2023.

#### **Seville Agreement 2.0**

The Standing Commission regularly received status reports from the ICRC and IFRC and provided advice on implementation of the Seville Agreement 2.0,<sup>3</sup> in particular on setting up an inclusive monitoring and implementation-support process as provided for in the agreement. The Standing Commission has also reflected on its own role and the conditions for establishing an ad hoc independent arbitration body (as called for in Article 15.9 of the agreement) based on the existence and practice of such an arbitration body since 1995. (See the 2024 progress report on the Seville Agreement 2.0.)

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<sup>3</sup> Resolution 8 of the 2022 Council of Delegates ([CD/22/R8](#)), which contains the [full text of the Seville Agreement 2.0](#) in an annex.

## Statement on integrity of the Movement

The Standing Commission has continued to participate in the working group on follow-up to the 2019 “Statement on integrity of the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement”<sup>4</sup> as part of its mission to promote the statement, strengthen the culture of integrity within the Movement and develop a community in which it is put into practice. (See the 2024 progress report on the statement on integrity of the Movement.)

### 4) SPECIAL PROJECT: TOWARDS A MOVEMENT POLICY FRAMEWORK

The 2019 “Statement on integrity of the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement” emphasizes the Movement’s commitment to its Fundamental Principles, which, together with its statutory, regulatory and policy frameworks, form the foundation of its ethical and principled humanitarian action. This commitment is imperative to conducting humanitarian work effectively while gaining and maintaining the acceptance and trust of the people we serve.

The Standing Commission has continued to reflect on the challenges of ensuring effective and resilient governance, integrity and compliance, with a particular focus on the statutory, regulatory and policy frameworks at the heart of the Movement’s integrity. Its 2022 report<sup>5</sup> stated a number of concerns and possible approaches for effective policymaking and follow-up on resolutions, including for those that are of greatest importance and require the most attention in terms of accountability and compliance.

The Standing Commission – having the core functions of approving resolutions submitted to the International Conference and Council of Delegates and encouraging and furthering their implementation – established an internal working group in late 2022 to explore these concerns and find avenues for addressing them. It is grateful to the Swiss Red Cross for making one of its senior managers available part-time in 2023 to provide support to the working group. The IFRC is also thanked for the part-time secondment of an officer from the Red Cross Society of China to support related research. The working group met four times in 2023 and 2024, at the end of which the Standing Commission accepted its proposals, including the need to develop a Movement policy framework. From September 2024, the Swedish Red Cross has generously agreed to second a part-time project manager to the Standing Commission to further advance its Movement Policy Framework initiative.

### Addressing a multifaceted issue

The International Conference and Council of Delegates have adopted 308 resolutions since the Movement’s current Statutes and Rules of Procedure were adopted in 1986,<sup>6</sup> and several hundred more if one counts those adopted since the first International Conference in 1867.

The Statutes designate resolutions as the sole vehicle for adopting decisions, recommendations and declarations, as well as for adding regulations and amendments to the Statutes and Rules of Procedure themselves.<sup>7</sup> Although the rules regarding the drafting and adopting of resolutions are strictly identical for the International Conference and the Council of Delegates, in practice there are significant differences between the resolutions submitted to one or the another. In particular, the content of resolutions is different, as well as their normative value vis-à-vis the Movement components and the member states of the International Conference. These differences are not reflected in any framework document.

While some resolutions are landmarks for the Movement, the majority – including some of prime importance – tend to be forgotten or overlooked, not least because they can be difficult

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<sup>4</sup> Resolution 2 of the 2019 Council of Delegates ([CD/19/R2](#)).

<sup>5</sup> Progress report on the work of the Standing Commission, 2020–2022 ([CD/22/27](#)).

<sup>6</sup> Resolution 31 of the 25th International Conference, Geneva, 1986.

<sup>7</sup> Articles 10.5, 10.7 and 20 of the Statutes; Rule 32 of the Rules of Procedure.

to access. Since 2019, efforts by the ICRC and IFRC to digitize resolutions and put archived Movement and IFRC statutory meeting materials online have made reports and decisions from those meetings vastly more accessible. However, there remains a **need for more advanced and targeted research** into the resolutions and norms that are most relevant to the issues currently facing the Movement and its components.

The Standing Commission has noted an increase, in recent decades, in **the variety of instruments submitted through resolutions**<sup>8</sup> to the International Conference and Council of Delegates. Moreover, it is not always easy to understand the normative value of these instruments or how consistently they are used, especially for Movement components.

There is no doubt that the Movement and its components base their collective and individual actions on shared principles and values, which – when applied to specific fields – constitute genuine policies serving “to provide direction for humanitarian action in specific areas, ensure consistent decision-making, guide thought and action, and define the boundaries for the conduct of the people who work within it”.<sup>9</sup> Yet, **the idea of “Movement policies” is not enshrined in the Statutes**. Some policies have nevertheless been formally adopted by the Council of Delegates (mainly since the 2000s), but in only in a few specific areas that fall far short of reflecting the wealth of norms included in Movement resolutions.<sup>10</sup>

Based on these observations, the Standing Commission agreed that essential norms were contained in resolutions adopted by the statutory meetings and that they formed a corpus of Movement policies. However, in the absence of a precise set of reference texts in specific areas (as is currently the case for IFRC policies), the assumption is that **most Movement policies are woven together from heterogeneous, complementary and sometimes interrelated resolutions, instruments and normative provisions**. It has therefore been proposed to group these norms into more than 30 themed clusters related to the Movement’s identity, governance and operating references. The design of this system is still in its early stages and should be further developed to become a central instrument for identifying the Movement’s essential norms, managing their life cycle and monitoring their implementation and impact on the Movement’s integrity.

In particular, the Standing Commission noted with interest the **possible contribution of resolutions and policies – and the work of grouping them by theme – to refreshing understanding of the Movement’s Statutes and Rules of Procedure**, which are almost 40 years old and have only undergone two revisions, both of which were narrowly focused. On several occasions, the Standing Commission has observed shortcomings in the existing provisions, or limits to how they are applied in a changing environment. Revising the Statutes is a cumbersome process, but work on the Movement’s resolutions and policies should make it possible to identify developments that will contribute to a more up-to-date understanding, interpretation and application of the Statutes.

### **Creating a Movement policy framework (2024–2026)**

The 34th International Conference will mark the beginning of the Standing Commission’s 19th session, with an accompanying change in membership. However, its commitment to preparing future statutory meetings of the Movement with relevant and impactful outcomes will remain unchanged. To better achieve that aim, the Standing Commission believes that the

<sup>8</sup> Policies, statements, appeals, strategies, action plans, visions, principles, charters, codes of conduct, approaches, positions, priorities, guidelines, commitments ... More than 20 instruments have been adopted in resolutions in recent decades, with no precise conceptual framework, and often with an unclear normative scope.

<sup>9</sup> Characteristics of a policy as defined in the IFRC Policy Framework (2013), which are also relevant in the broader context of the Movement.

<sup>10</sup> Currently, formal Movement policies only cover the areas of: communication and advocacy, refugees, internally displaced people, migrants, partnership with the corporate sector, and mental health and psychosocial support.

Movement should be equipped with a policy framework for its statutory bodies, as is the common practice at many other organizations.

The purpose of the policy framework will be to provide Movement-wide guidance for the development and life cycle of policies and resolutions, including ownership, preparation, approval, promotion, implementation and review. The framework will aim to harmonize the creation and follow-up of resolutions and policies, and to provide the Movement and its statutory bodies with relevant, consistent, up-to-date and easy-to-access reference norms that encourage monitoring and compliance, where relevant.

At the 2024 Council of Delegates, the Standing Commission will outline the work it intends to pursue over at least the next two years, with a focus on:

- preparing a **Movement policy framework for adoption by the 2026 Council of Delegates**, which will set standards for the development and life cycle of Movement resolutions and policies
- supplementing the framework with **measures and tools** to facilitate its administration and oversight of its implementation by the Standing Commission, for example:
  - a **glossary of policy instruments** associated with resolutions and guidance on their use
  - a **policy cluster system** to help analyse and navigate key Movement norms
  - **procedures** for screening new resolution proposals and ensuring appropriate action is taken at each stage of a resolution's life cycle: drafting, consultation, negotiation, adoption, promotion, accessibility, implementation monitoring and reporting, evaluation, accountability, compliance and (where appropriate) revision and sunseting
- developing an **online search platform** for accessing Movement resolutions and policies, especially core reference norms
- seeking **active support from Movement components** in carrying out projects associated with the framework, in the form of staff secondments or mandates to coordinate and develop projects, contributions of expertise and – of course – increased ownership and consensus to make the undertaking a success.

## 5) MOVEMENT AWARDS 2024

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 March 2024, the Standing Commission decided to **award the Henry Dunant Medal to four individuals for their outstanding achievements**:

- Mr Massimo Barra, Italian Red Cross
- Ms Dora James, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines Red Cross
- Mr Greg Vickery, Australian Red Cross
- Ms Margareta Wahlström, Swedish Red Cross.

The Standing Commission congratulates the laureates, who will be honoured at the 2024 Council of Delegates. It thanks all the nominating National Societies and co-sponsors for their high-quality nominees.



For the next awarding of the Henry Dunant Medal and the Prize for Peace and Humanity, the Standing Commission continues to encourage nominators and sponsors to consider both the nominee's exceptional achievements and the promotion of diversity, inclusion and integrity.

## 6) FINANCIAL MATTERS

The Standing Commission expresses its profound gratitude to the ICRC, the IFRC and donor National Societies for their indispensable financial support, which enabled it to fulfil its mandate and functions. Its budgets for 2022 and 2023 were fully covered by the IFRC, the ICRC and voluntary contributions from National Societies, which successfully reached the target of covering one-third of the budget each.<sup>11</sup> The Standing Commission also received invaluable human resources support from the Swiss Red Cross in 2023 and from the Swedish Red Cross from September 2024.

The Standing Commission reiterates its deep gratitude to the National Societies of the following countries (over one-third of all National Societies), which generously contributed to its budget in 2022, 2023 and/or 2024:<sup>12</sup>

Albania	Germany	Qatar
Andorra	Greece	Republic of Korea
Antigua and Barbuda	Guinea	Romania
Australia	Honduras	Russia
Austria	Iraq	Saint Vincent and the Grenadines
Bahrain	Ireland	San Marino
Bangladesh	Israel	Serbia
Belgium	Italy	South Sudan
Bolivia	Japan	Spain
Bulgaria	Jordan	Sweden
Burundi	Kuwait	Switzerland
Cambodia	Liberia	Thailand
Canada	Liechtenstein	Tonga
China	Luxembourg	Türkiye
Colombia	Malaysia	Turkmenistan
Cook Islands	Mali	United Kingdom
Costa Rica	Monaco	United States
Croatia	Montenegro	Zimbabwe
Cyprus	Morocco	
Czech Republic	Netherlands	
Dominica	New Zealand	
Dominican Republic	Nigeria	
Ecuador	Norway	
Estonia	Pakistan	
Ethiopia	Palau	
Fiji	Palestine	
Finland	Philippines	
France	Poland	

<sup>11</sup> In accordance with Resolution 1 of the 2007 Council of Delegates, which established this principle for financing the work of the Standing Commission.

<sup>12</sup> List of contributors as of 31 August 2024.

## 7) CONCLUSION

The Standing Commission welcomes remarks and questions about this report. It looks forward in particular to receiving input and support regarding the Movement policy framework initiative and associated projects to help make the initiative a success.

Looking ahead, the Standing Commission congratulates the Japanese Red Cross Society on its initiative to promote the Movement's humanitarian action at Expo 2025 in Osaka and Kansai. Celebrations are also planned for the centenary of the Council of Delegates and the Standing Commission in 2028.

For more information, contact: [standing.commission@standcom.ch](mailto:standing.commission@standcom.ch).