



Power of humanity

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Call for respect and support for principled humanitarian action

RESOLUTION

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RESOLUTION

Call for respect and support for principled humanitarian action

The Council of Delegates,

expressing alarm at the magnitude of human suffering caused by the increasing number of armed conflicts and other situations of violence, the effects of climate change, disasters and other humanitarian crises worldwide, with the number of people in need of humanitarian assistance and protection more than doubling in the last decade and reaching record levels, *expressing deep concern* for the safety and well-being of all people affected and for their ability to access life-saving assistance, and *expressing sorrow* for the number of lives of humanitarian workers and volunteers lost in the service of humanity,

expressing deep concern about the greater impediments to the ability of principled humanitarian actors to deliver assistance and protection to people who most need it, owing to increasing political and societal polarization, the politicization of aid, false characterization of the humanitarian principles of impartiality and neutrality as furthering the interests of an adversary, the need for improved understanding of and support for the independence of National Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (National Societies), restrictions on the funding of principled humanitarian actors and on their access to affected people, restrictions resulting from sanctions and counterterrorism measures that impede the capacity of humanitarian actors to operate in accordance with humanitarian principles and international humanitarian law (IHL), the spread – through social media and other channels – of misinformation and disinformation that affects the safety of humanitarian workers and the people in their care, and the persistence of threats and acts of violence directed at humanitarian workers,

expressing deep concern also about the use of dehumanizing language and rhetoric by a range of actors, including those in positions of authority, that is prevalent in many armed conflicts, other situations of violence and other emergencies where people face increasing inequalities and greater levels of vulnerability and poverty, as this dehumanizing language and rhetoric, often amplified through media and social media, contributes to an environment that endangers affected people and the impartial, neutral and independent humanitarian actors serving them, and to violations of IHL, international human rights law and basic humanitarian principles,

recalling that the Fundamental Principles are at the heart of our International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement's (Movement) distinctive identity and mission, based on over 160 years of operational experience and normative developments, including the formal proclamation of the Fundamental Principles by the International Conference of the Red Cross in 1965 and their adoption in the Statutes of the Movement by the International Conference of the Red Cross and Red Crescent (International Conference) in 1986. All components of the Movement are bound by the Fundamental Principles, which are the foundation of their principled humanitarian action, and crucial to gaining and maintaining the acceptance and trust of and safe access to the people and communities they serve,

recalling also the role of the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) as a specifically neutral and independent organization and intermediary, as recognized by the 1949 Geneva Conventions and the Statutes of the Movement, and its primary responsibility to maintain and disseminate the Fundamental Principles, the role of the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC), in collaboration with the ICRC, to disseminate the

Fundamental Principles among National Societies, and the key role of National Societies in upholding and disseminating the Fundamental Principles within their own country as a critical means of fostering understanding of and promoting respect for principled humanitarian action,

recalling further Article 4 of the Statutes of the Movement, Resolution 2 of the 30th International Conference in 2007 on the “Specific nature of the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement in action and partnership and the role of National Societies as auxiliaries to the public authorities in the humanitarian field”, Resolution 4 of the 31st International Conference in 2011, “Furthering the auxiliary role: Partnership for stronger National Societies and volunteering development” and the background report to the 32nd International Conference in 2015 on *The Fundamental Principles in action: A unique ethical, operational and institutional framework*, which highlight the importance of clearly defining the auxiliary relationship between a National Society and the public authorities in domestic legislation in order to maintain the National Society’s operational independence, strengthen its humanitarian diplomacy, and formalize the commitment of States to respect the duty and ability of National Societies to abide by the Fundamental Principles,

highlighting the trust and access that National Societies and their volunteers enjoy in local communities and the key role of National Societies in promoting principled humanitarian action, and *acknowledging* the complementary actions of the international components of the Movement to amplify and support local National Societies’ voices and roles as principled humanitarian actors,

recalling the IFRC’s primary responsibility to safeguard the integrity of National Societies in accordance with Article 6 of the Statutes of the Movement, and the responsibilities of each Movement component to address integrity concerns within their respective organization, and *recalling* the collective Movement commitments to strengthen integrity, accountability and trust, such as Resolutions 1 and 2 of the 2019 Council of Delegates, the “Movement-wide commitments for community engagement and accountability” and the “Statement on integrity of the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement”, respectively,

recalling also the commitment of States party to the 1949 Geneva Conventions to at all times respect the adherence by all components of the Movement to the Fundamental Principles, in accordance with Article 2.4 of the Statutes of the Movement, and *recalling* their obligations under IHL to allow National Societies, the IFRC and the ICRC to pursue their activities in accordance with these principles,

welcoming the landmark United Nations Security Council Resolution 2664 of December 2022, which aims to mitigate the impact of UN financial sanctions on humanitarian activities and activities to meet basic human needs through exemptions from sanctions (“humanitarian carve-outs”) for humanitarian organizations, including Movement components,

recalling the Appeal for Respect for Neutral and Impartial Humanitarian Action (2022 Appeal) by the chair of the Standing Commission of the Red Cross and Red Crescent (Standing Commission) and the presidents of the ICRC and the IFRC, which was welcomed by the 2022 Council of Delegates in Resolution 13, and *recognizing* the need to strengthen and expand on the 2022 Appeal in order to address current and future challenges to principled humanitarian action,

1. *endorses* the new Appeal to States (annexed to this resolution) to respect impartial, neutral and independent humanitarian action, and *requests* that this Appeal be communicated to States at the 34th International Conference;
2. *reaffirms* the obligation of all components of the Movement to act at all times in accordance with the Fundamental Principles, particularly humanity, impartiality,

neutrality and independence, as an imperative to safely access, assist and protect people in vulnerable situations;

3. *commits* National Societies, the IFRC and the ICRC, individually and collectively, to enhancing understanding of and respect for principled humanitarian action within their respective organizations, and in particular to ensuring that the behaviours expected with regard to impartiality, neutrality and independence are well known, understood and applied at all levels of their respective organizations (governing bodies, management, staff and volunteers), including through the application of codes of conduct and organizational policies (e.g. social media policies), training and peer-to-peer exchanges, bearing in mind the crucial reputational and operational importance of principled humanitarian action in enabling the safety of humanitarian workers and safe access to people in need;
4. *commits* the leaders of the ICRC, the IFRC and National Societies to leading by example in abiding by impartiality, neutrality and independence in all of their words, behaviours and actions;
5. *commits* the ICRC, the IFRC and National Societies to strengthening their work together on engagement and humanitarian diplomacy activities with States, local authorities, communities and other stakeholders, as well as with the general public, to promote greater understanding of and respect for impartial, neutral and independent humanitarian action, which is one of the key elements to build and maintain trust, address the misinformation and disinformation that endangers humanitarian action or actors and ensure safe and effective access to all people in need;
6. *calls on* each National Society, with the support where needed of the IFRC, the ICRC and peer National Societies, to further the dialogue with the public authorities with a view to strengthening its independent action and decision-making, including by strengthening its legal base in domestic law, in particular in relation to its auxiliary role in the humanitarian field, and in accordance with the Movement's agreed standards as defined in the Statutes of the Movement and in line with Resolution 2 of the 30th International Conference in 2007 and Resolution 4 of the 31st International Conference in 2011;
7. *also calls on* each National Society to regularly review, and if necessary, revise, its statutes or constitution to ensure that they conform with the Movement's agreed standards as set out in the *Guidance for National Society Statutes 2018*, including the commitment to abide at all times by the Fundamental Principles and the requirements of principled humanitarian action;
8. *reaffirms* the commitment of each component of the Movement to build and maintain trust with the people we serve, communities, governments and local authorities, donors, external partners and the wider public by demonstrating integrity, transparency and accountability in all our actions and through continuous dialogue and engagement, as reflected in relevant Movement commitments;
9. *reaffirms*, in accordance with Article 14 of the Movement Coordination for Collective Impact Agreement (Seville Agreement 2.0), that each component of the Movement must address any integrity concerns through its respective internal mechanisms, that National Societies are supported, as required, by the IFRC and in accordance with the IFRC's *Policy on Protection of Integrity of National Societies and Organs of the International Federation*, and that the IFRC and the ICRC consult each other, as required, when there are concerns related to respect for the Fundamental Principles, in dialogue with the National Society concerned;

10. *calls on* National Societies, the IFRC and the ICRC to intensify their collective efforts to share their experiences and learning on strengthening integrity and trust, *notes* the progress report on the follow-up to the “Statement on integrity of the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement”, *welcomes* the development of a community of practice on strengthening integrity for continued learning and improvement, and *encourages* all components of the Movement to join and contribute to it;
11. *calls on* the ICRC, IFRC and National Societies to take action, in line with their respective mandates, to follow up on the commitments made in this resolution to increase understanding of and adherence to the Fundamental Principles, including:
 - 11.1 strengthening engagement with States, local authorities, communities and other stakeholders, as well as with the general public, for example through various communications activities, to improve understanding of and respect for impartial, neutral and independent humanitarian action and to build and maintain trust and address misinformation and disinformation, with the aim of ensuring the safety of humanitarian workers and safe, sustained and meaningful access to all people in need;
 - 11.2 engaging with States on strengthening the legal base of the National Societies, including a clear definition of the auxiliary role of National Societies in the humanitarian field, to facilitate the principled humanitarian action of National Societies;
 - 11.3 strengthening knowledge and learning programmes for governing bodies, management, staff and volunteers within the Movement in order to cultivate behavioural competencies in accordance with the Fundamental Principles, including the documenting and sharing of good practice and providing operational examples of how the Fundamental Principles are used and respected in the planning and implementation of humanitarian programmes, highlighting the challenges and dilemmas that arise and the consequences for affected people when principled humanitarian action is not respected or facilitated;
 - 11.4 actively engaging with the community of practice on strengthening integrity to share their experiences and identify challenges and risks affecting integrity and trust;
12. *invites* Movement components to promote the Appeal to States and to report to the next Council of Delegates on the measures taken and the achievements and challenges faced in implementing the above actions.

Annex: Appeal to States

We are deeply alarmed by the magnitude of human suffering across the world, caused by the increasing number of armed conflicts and other situations of violence, the effects of climate change, disasters and other humanitarian crises. The number of people in need of humanitarian assistance and protection has more than doubled over the last decade and is reaching record levels. We are also dismayed and deeply saddened by the increasing number of lives of humanitarian workers and volunteers lost in the service of humanity.

At the same time, to our profound concern, principled humanitarian actors are facing greater impediments to their ability to deliver assistance and protection to the people who most need it, as a result of, in particular:

1. increasing political and societal polarization
2. the politicization of aid
3. false characterization of the humanitarian principles of impartiality and neutrality as furthering the interests of an adversary
4. the need for improved understanding of and support for the independence of National Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (National Societies)
5. the use of dehumanizing language and rhetoric, prevalent in many armed conflicts, other situations of violence and other emergencies, especially by those in positions of authority, which contributes to an environment that endangers affected people and the impartial and neutral humanitarian actors serving them, and to violations of international humanitarian law, international human rights law and basic humanitarian principles
6. restrictions on the funding of principled humanitarian actors and on their access to affected people
7. restrictions resulting from sanctions and counterterrorism measures that impede the capacity of humanitarian actors to operate in accordance with humanitarian principles and international humanitarian law
8. the spread – through social media and other channels – of misinformation and disinformation that imperils humanitarian workers and people in their care.
9. the persistence of threats and acts of violence directed at humanitarian workers and volunteers.

The Fundamental Principles of the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement are the foundation of our principled humanitarian action. In all circumstances, they are crucial to gaining and maintaining the acceptance and trust of and safe access to the people and communities we serve. Disturbingly, we live in times when respect for these Fundamental Principles is at its most critical, but also when it is the most challenged.

Before this International Conference of the Red Cross and Red Crescent (International Conference), we firmly recommit all components of the Movement to strictly respect our Fundamental Principles in all our words, behaviour and actions, and to fulfil our respective mandates. Likewise, we reaffirm our commitment to strengthen integrity, accountability and transparency, and to build trust with the people you have mandated us to serve.

On behalf of the Movement, we now join together to respectfully appeal to States, as High Contracting Parties to the 1949 Geneva Conventions and as members of this International Conference, to safeguard the Movement's principled humanitarian action. We appeal to States to recommit to and fully implement their obligations to at all times respect the adherence by all the components of the Movement to the Fundamental Principles, as agreed in Article 2.4 of the Statutes of the Movement, in particular those of humanity, impartiality, neutrality and independence, and to support and facilitate the humanitarian mission and activities of the components of the Movement.

In particular:

- We appeal to States to take all appropriate measures to prevent, stop and remedy any abuse, pressure, misinformation, disinformation and dehumanizing rhetoric, through social media or otherwise, that harms the physical, psychological or reputational well-being of people in vulnerable situations and the staff and volunteers of the Movement components serving them;
- We appeal to States to work with the National Societies, with the support of the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) and the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC), to ensure that all levels of government and public authorities understand, respect and facilitate the mission, mandate and principled humanitarian action of the National Societies, including in their role as auxiliaries to the public authorities in the humanitarian field, and of the IFRC and the ICRC;
- We appeal to each State to renew its commitment to respect the ability of the ICRC, the IFRC and the National Societies, including in their role as auxiliaries to the public authorities in the humanitarian field, to operate in accordance with the Fundamental Principles, in particular impartiality, neutrality and independence, as a vital means to ensure unhindered and safe access to people in need. This includes strengthening the legal base of the National Societies in domestic law and refraining from requesting National Societies to perform activities that are not in accordance with the Fundamental Principles;
- We appeal to States to ensure that sanctions and counterterrorism measures do not impede the ability of impartial and neutral humanitarian organizations, such as Movement components, to have access to people in need and deliver humanitarian assistance and protection activities. We call on States to swiftly and faithfully implement the humanitarian exemptions required by United Nations Security Council Resolution 2664 of December 2022 and include similar humanitarian exemptions in autonomous sanctions and counterterrorism criminal laws.

We are ready and willing to constructively engage with States towards the common objective of upholding impartial, neutral and independent humanitarian action, essential to enabling the Movement to fulfil its life-saving humanitarian mission.