



# 2026 Council of Delegates

3-4 December 2026, Geneva

**United for Humanity**  
Concept note

The 2024 Council of Delegates and the 34th International Conference demonstrated the power of the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement, grounded in its unity, mission and Fundamental Principles.

The 2026 Council of Delegates will once again take place at a critical juncture. As a Movement, we must rise as one to meet the challenges that lie ahead and hold the 2026 Council of Delegates under the theme of “United for Humanity” – a timely call to strengthen our cohesion and sharpen our focus as we navigate complexity and mobilize to continue to deliver principled, impactful humanitarian action.

As we write, the international humanitarian system is being dismantled – a dismantling characterized by drastic financial cuts and the politicization and privatization of aid, all taking place against a background of criticism and the questioning of humanitarian action. This is happening even though humanitarian needs continue to spiral. Today, there are more than 130 ongoing armed conflicts and, in 2024, there were 393 natural hazard-related disasters recorded, more than 122 million people displaced worldwide and at least ten epidemic outbreaks reported at multi-country level. This reality is being precipitated by challenges to the norms and legal frameworks that underpin our work, with hostilities increasingly taking place that show total disregard for human life and dignity, and humanitarian workers coming under attack. For humanitarian workers, 2024 was the deadliest year on record, and the number of casualties continues to rise at an alarming rate.

Together, these overlapping crises are placing immense pressure on already fragile systems, deepening humanitarian needs and severely impacting the safety, well-being and resilience of affected populations. It is also making effective humanitarian action at scale difficult, with specific challenges related to responding in urban centres, in which more than half of the world's population live today.

The 2026 Council of Delegates will aim to enhance and demonstrate our Movement's unique value proposition, grounded in the complementarity of our roles and mandates, our local reach and proximity to affected people, our global influence and our Fundamental Principles, to ensure that it remains a trusted partner of choice and a leading actor in shaping humanitarian norms and practices.

This concept note marks the beginning of an iterative consultation process – one that relies on the active participation and engagement of National Societies. Through shared reflections, ideas and feedback, we aim to co-create an agenda that truly reflects the priorities of all components of the Movement. The co-organizers look forward to receiving your feedback and suggestions on this concept note, based on which the Council of Delegates agenda will be developed.

# BUILDING THE 2026 COUNCIL OF DELEGATES

## *Strengthening our collective action*

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### **Addressing the present: Shaping the Movement of the future**

The next Council of Delegates will reflect on what is needed for the Movement to remain a leading principled humanitarian actor in a fragmented, multipolar world in which humanitarian norms and action are questioned and increasingly disregarded. The Movement needs to capitalize on the diversity and complementarity of all its components in order to preserve human dignity, respect for international humanitarian law (IHL) and principled humanitarian action. It will consider how to further enhance the Movement's collective action, building on the mandates and capacities of all its components and recognizing the central role of National Societies as auxiliaries to their authorities in the humanitarian field. Areas for specific consideration within the Movement could include enhancing our operational impact for affected people collectively, optimizing resource mobilization in a resource-scarce environment, the application of the Fundamental Principles in the face of technological developments, promoting an environment conducive to peace, and data protection and the responsible use and sharing of data.

This moment must be seized with determination and a sense of collective ambition to ensure that the Movement is fit for purpose in a rapidly changing world, while remaining true to the Movement's Fundamental Principles that drive our humanitarian actions globally.

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### **Reinforcing a culture of respect for IHL: The Movement going forward**

The 2019 and 2024 statutory meetings underscored the significant role carried out by Movement components in promoting the application of IHL and highlighted the value of a unified Movement approach to building a universal culture of compliance with IHL and addressing contemporary challenges.

Ensuring a lasting humanitarian impact, particularly by promoting the relevance of and respect for IHL, requires sustained, long-term commitment and investment by all Movement components.

The next Council of Delegates will highlight ways to contribute collectively – in accordance with our respective mandates, roles and responsibilities, and capacities – to the implementation of Resolution 1 of the 2019 International Conference, “Bringing IHL Home: A Road Map for Better National Implementation of International Humanitarian Law,” and Resolution 1 of the 2024 International Conference, “Building a Universal Culture of Compliance with International Humanitarian Law”. This will be achieved by co-designing a four-year roadmap.

For example, the roadmap will consider developing joint tools to support the better implementation of IHL; setting up peer-to-peer support at global, regional and national levels; sharing good practice on IHL through a joint platform; and working on IHL communication on common priorities that each Movement component can address in a complementary manner with their relevant public authorities. It will lay the groundwork for a stronger, more coordinated IHL engagement, reinforcing the Movement's collective ability to promote IHL worldwide.

## Protecting humanitarian workers

The 2026 Council of Delegates will use its collective voice to press for the protection, safety and security of humanitarian volunteers and staff and medical personnel as a shared, non-negotiable responsibility. Words of solidarity must be matched with action. The Movement wants to honour the memory of those it has lost by standing firm with those who continue to serve. It also wants to take a strong stance to ensure that their safety is not the exception, but rather the standard.

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## Addressing harmful information

The spread of harmful information not only impacts the individuals and communities affected by crises, but it also undermines the ability of humanitarian organizations to serve them effectively. In many settings, individuals affected by conflict and disaster are among the first to experience its impact, whether through reduced access to assistance, increased exposure to stigma or violence, or the weakening of trust in those providing support.

Several recent campaigns targeting components of the Movement have demonstrated how harmful narratives can compromise not only the safety of volunteers and staff, but also the effectiveness and continuity of a humanitarian response. Addressing harmful information is therefore a priority for the entire Movement.

The Movement needs to build a shared, evidence-based, people-centred approach in order to strengthen the resilience and agency of affected communities, help safeguard humanitarian access and reinforce the conditions necessary for principled humanitarian action in a digital and polarized world. It can draw on its global presence, its values, its capacity to engage with states and its strong foundation of trust to respond in a way that protects those it serves – and those who serve.

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## Strengthening the resilience of urban communities: Our way forward

The world is rapidly urbanizing, green spaces and forests are being converted into buildings, hills and wetlands are turning into unplanned settlements, and existing urban areas are becoming increasingly vulnerable. These transformations often occur without proper regulation or in defiance of existing rules, leading to complex and interconnected vulnerabilities in cities. Overlapping crises, rapid population growth and the expansion of informal settlements are placing immense pressure on urban systems. Weak governance further exacerbates these challenges, disproportionately affecting marginalized communities.

In response, the Movement, through the 2022 Council of Delegates, committed to strengthening urban resilience, recognizing cities as both vulnerable and as hubs of innovation. National Societies are actively engaged in daily service delivery in urban contexts, responding to diverse hazards, and collaborating with the public and private sectors, as well as local communities. Their trusted presence, agility and multi-sectoral capabilities uniquely position them to mobilize volunteers and deliver effective, localized urban responses.

The 2026 Council of Delegates presents a pivotal opportunity to reaffirm our commitment to position National Societies as the partners of choice and as critical local actors in driving principled, impactful urban resilience. This will be achieved through the adoption of the Principles of Action proposed in the 2022 Council of Delegates resolution.

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## The Movement's awards

The 2026 Council of Delegates will celebrate the recipients of the Henry Dunant Medal, the Red Cross and Red Crescent Prize for Peace and Humanity and the Movement Family Links Medal.

# THE ROAD TO THE 35TH INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE

The humanitarian landscape and the multilateral environment in four years’ time cannot be predicted. It is, however, certain that – no matter what – the world will still need a unified and principled Movement that acts with efficiency and effectiveness to influence norms and deliver high-quality humanitarian services to communities.

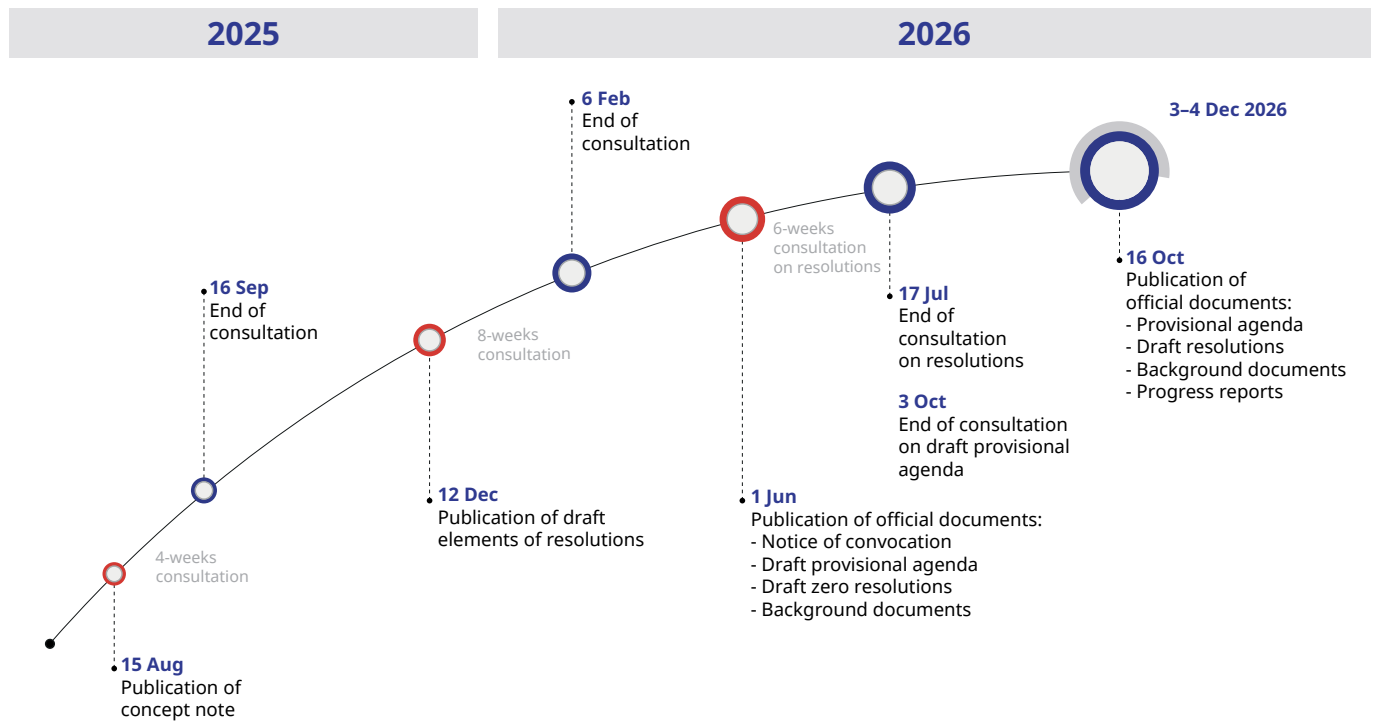
The spirit and outcomes of the 2026 Council of Delegates will represent an important milestone on the road to the 35th International Conference and will strongly position the Movement towards the states party to the Geneva Conventions as a reliable partner with global and local reach.

## BE PART OF THE JOURNEY TO THE COUNCIL OF DELEGATES

The substance and outcomes of the 2026 Council of Delegates will be co-designed through an inclusive and participatory consultation process, the key milestones of which are provided below.

Milestone	Publication date	Deadline for feedback
Concept note	15 August 2025	16 September 2025
Draft elements of resolutions	12 December 2025	6 February 2026
Mailing of official documents	1 June 2026	→ 17 July 2026 for resolutions and background documents
→ Notice of convocation		→ 3 October 2026 for draft provisional agenda
→ Draft provisional agenda		
→ Draft zero resolutions and background documents		
Mailing of official documents	16 October 2026	
→ Provisional agenda and programme		
→ Draft resolutions and background documents		
→ Progress reports		
2026 Council of Delegates	3–4 December 2026	

# 2026 COUNCIL OF DELEGATES



To help guide you in your feedback and suggestions in relation to this concept note, please consider the following questions:

- Do the themes outlined in this concept note reflect the Movement's **priorities, challenges** and **aspirations**?
- Is there anything missing that would require the attention of the Council of Delegates in 2026?
- What outcomes would you expect from the Council of Delegates on the proposed topics?

Please provide your written feedback **before 16 September 2025** by emailing: [conferences@rcrcconference.org](mailto:conferences@rcrcconference.org).

Your insights and feedback are essential to ensure that the Council of Delegates becomes a truly collective platform – one that strengthens our unity and enhances our impact.





