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Strengthening the resilience of urban communities: Principles of Action

DRAFT ELEMENTS OF RESOLUTION

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in consultation with the sub-working groups of the Movement Urban Resilience Working Group

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Strengthening the resilience of urban communities: Principles of Action

BACKGROUND

The draft elements of the proposed resolution “Strengthening the resilience of urban communities: Principles of Action” seek to outline the possible substance of individual paragraphs, suggesting potential wording but without providing a definitive draft text. The main aim of this proposed resolution is to present the annexed Principles of Action, drafted in fulfilment of the 2022 Council of Delegates resolution on urban resilience.

This document, together with the Annex, 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 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?
- Do you agree with the Principles of Action presented in the Annex, taking into account that they are informed by a participatory and consultative process?
- 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

This resolution builds and delivers on the stipulations of the 2022 Council of Delegates resolution on addressing urban challenges (Strengthening the resilience of urban communities: Our way forward), recognizing that urban pressures have only intensified since its adoption. Rapid urbanization, compounded by the escalating impacts of climate change, health crises, migration, insecurity and deepening social inequality and polarization, has increased the vulnerability of millions living in urban and peri-urban areas. These complex and interconnected risks demand that the Movement’s collective work urgently evolve and expand to meet the real and growing needs of affected populations. While previous guidance and strategies have laid an important foundation, implementation gaps and the scale of emerging urban vulnerabilities require renewed commitment, enhanced coordination and stronger alignment with global and regional frameworks, including the IFRC Strategy 2030 and related humanitarian and development agendas. The resolution seeks to lay ground rules and principles to indicate the main areas that require action and investment, staying true to our mandate and principles.

Furthermore, this resolution calls for strengthened human, financial and technical investment to ensure National Societies are equipped to deliver relevant, inclusive and sustainable urban resilience programming. Progress is to be monitored and reported to the Council of Delegates, and this collective urban ambition brought to the 35th International Conference.

Preambular paragraphs (PPs)

PP1

The first preambular paragraph of this resolution should recall the impetus and existing commitment made at the last two Council of Delegates meetings for the Movement to act at scale to address growing vulnerabilities in towns and cities worldwide, including by developing a globally applicable set of Principles of Action for Urban Resilience. Suggested wording:

recalling the 2022 resolution “Strengthening the resilience of urban communities: Our way forward”, the 2022 resolution “War in cities” and the annexed Movement Action Plan and the 2024 resolution “War in cities: A solemn appeal from the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement”, adopted by the Council of Delegates, and their respective scopes of application as well as the commitment of the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement (Movement) to act at scale to address growing vulnerabilities in towns and cities worldwide

PP2

This paragraph could recall today’s growing urban vulnerabilities. Suggested wording:

recognizing that urban communities face multiple and interconnected risks – including climate change, disasters, environmental degradation, rapid urbanization, public health crises, displacement and social exclusion – which disproportionately affect people already at risk

PP3

This paragraph could emphasize and reiterate the continued and increasingly pressing need to address urban vulnerabilities and inequalities through concerted action. Suggested wording:

acknowledging that building resilience in urban settings requires coordinated and inclusive approaches, rooted in community leadership and supported by partnerships with local and national authorities, civil society and the private sector

PP4

This paragraph could emphasize linkages between the Movement’s work and the broader sector and how this effort would support global urban agendas. Suggested wording:

emphasizing that strengthening urban resilience contributes to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals, the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction and the New Urban Agenda

PP5

This paragraph could explain the process that was followed by the IFRC Secretariat to fulfil the tasks specified in the 2022 Council of Delegates resolution (Resolution 11) and underline the consultative nature of the process to develop the Principles presented in the Annex. The consultations, which lasted for ten months, were co-chaired by a number of National Societies and reference centres and included inputs from many National Societies, reference centres and IFRC and ICRC subject matter experts. Suggested wording:

noting that the Principles of Action were developed through a highly consultative process, led by the Secretariat of the International Federation of Red Cross and Red

Crescent Societies (IFRC) and informed by the coordinated efforts of five sub-working groups of the Movement Urban Resilience Working Group under the guidance of the Strategic Leadership Group

Operative paragraphs (OPs)

OP1

The first operative paragraph should present the Principles of Action set out in the Annex and call upon the Movement to adopt it as a guiding document to increase the relevance, quality and scale of the work National Societies are already doing in urban areas. Suggested wording:

adopts the Principles of Action (Annex) as the core framework for guiding the implementation of this resolution across the Movement

OP2

This operative paragraph could convey the aspiration for National Societies to use and promote the Principles of Action not only in their own work but also in their partnerships and networks. Suggested wording:

encourages all National Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (National Societies) to approach and work in collaboration with national and municipal authorities and their city-level networks to encourage broader adoption and implementation of the ambitions of the Principles of Action

OP3

This operative paragraph could strongly advocate for National Societies to mainstream these Principles into their operational and governance thinking and offer them the support, networks and expertise of the IFRC and the ICRC as appropriate and as needed. Suggested wording:

requests all National Societies, supported by the IFRC and the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) in accordance with their mandates, to integrate these Principles into their operating models, urban strategies, programmes and partnerships

OP4

This operative paragraph could encourage National Societies to apply the Principles not only to their leadership and strategic thinking but also to their community-level work for the whole-of-society approach that is envisioned for urban resilience. Suggested wording:

invites all National Societies to lead and support inclusive processes at community and city levels to contextualize and operationalize the Principles of Action, ensuring the participation of marginalized and at-risk groups

OP5

This operative paragraph could call upon the Movement to prioritize the Principles of Action as an agenda item for the 35th International Conference, by fostering engagement with municipal authorities in the first stage of this process and with States in the second stage in order to support their uptake and operationalization. Suggested wording:

encourages all components of the Movement to prioritize engagement with municipal authorities and States, with a view to paving the way to the endorsement of the Principles of Action at the 35th International Conference, as a key step in aligning policies and unlocking resources and investment to build resilience in urban environments

OP6

This operative paragraph could designate the IFRC to oversee the continued engagement, discussion and review of the Principles to make them fit for purpose in the years to come. In addition, it should reiterate the previously outlined ambition to bring the Principles of Action to the 35th International Conference. Suggested wording:

invites the IFRC to support the membership with an operational framework for the mainstreaming of the Principles and to set up a process for their periodical review, refinement and contextualization, with a view to subsequently presenting them to States and partners at the 35th International Conference of the Red Cross and Red Crescent

Annex 1

Strengthening the resilience of urban communities: Principles of Action for Urban Resilience

Preamble – Towards a resilient urban future

The future of humanity is urban. Cities drive economic, social and technological change, yet they are also where socio-economic fragility is more prevalent, leading to humanitarian, social and environmental challenges. From steady urban development to highly fragile urban settings and from informal settlements to coastal megacities, billions live amid escalating pressures from health and water challenges, climate shocks, inequality, exclusion and declining social cohesion. The future pressures of risks in urban environments will grow at the same pace as the opportunities, growth, knowledge and innovation that cities generate.

The relevance of National Societies in this fast-changing landscape depends on their ability to adapt to urban challenges and deliver services that address the most pressing needs. Each urban setting has its own characteristics; however, it is important to distinguish between contexts of (1) fragility, (2) political instability and (3) development and growth and between urban areas with high, medium or low access to essential services.

This involves combining a capacity assessment of National Society programmes and services available in urban contexts with an analysis of their relevance, supported by a community trust index. Additionally, it is essential to assess the National Society's ability to shape safer, fairer, more equitable and more sustainable urban multi-hazard risk reduction. To match this growing engagement with tangible impact, the urban narrative must evolve, combining technical action and strategic and leadership initiatives.

The Principles of Action for Urban Resilience serve as a shared compass for the IFRC and National Societies, guiding the way to greater preparedness and readiness with a multi-hazard risk lens and identifying service gaps that lead to exclusion and marginalization. This is particularly critical in less developed urban areas and unplanned settlements, where access, acceptance and trust in humanitarian actors must be established before emergencies or crises occur.

Grounded in the mandates and realities of National Societies and inspired by the potential of urban environments, the Principles of Action for Urban Resilience reflect a conviction that the quality of our ambition and the consistency of our action will determine our collective impact.

The following Principles of Action for Urban Resilience serve to guide our work in urban contexts, consistently maintaining a multi-hazard risk approach to adapting to the complexities of cities and harnessing the opportunities they offer.

By adopting this Council of Delegates resolution, National Societies, with the support of the IFRC and the ICRC, stand to:

1. Strengthen and accelerate urban readiness for multi-crisis response

Urban preparedness and readiness create the conditions necessary to build trust and credibility among multiple stakeholders. This involves strengthening the capacity of National Societies to become the partner of choice in addressing vulnerabilities and reducing exposure to hazards and risks.

Depending on the urban context, establishing pre-agreements with city authorities and maintaining relationships with political stakeholders is essential to ensure that they understand and support the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement's operating principles. Similarly, agreements with the banking sector are critical to enable the rapid scale-up of cash programming, while partnerships with the private sector help ensure business continuity and foster solidarity before, during and after disasters and crises. Maintaining trust-based relationships with authorities, the mass media and opinion leaders is a key component of effective preparedness.

Finally, response capacity in urban settings is just as important as efforts to build resilience. A localized humanitarian response to emergencies, disasters and crises requires a multi-crisis approach that is contextualized according to the realities on the ground.

2. Master the full spectrum of multiple hazards and barriers in high-risk urban areas

National Societies excel in conducting joint analysis with local authorities and community engagement tailored to the unique characteristics of urban communities while fostering social cohesion, inclusion and meaningful participation. Achieving this requires flexible, adaptive and context-specific approaches that reflect urban diversity, using risk mapping, analysis of risk triggers, stakeholder mapping to identify key actors and community feedback systems to ensure all actions remain inclusive, legitimate and community driven.

3. Lead and champion inclusive urban stakeholder engagement and coalition-building

Effective preparedness and readiness provide National Societies with the conditions required to act as neutral, impartial and independent humanitarian actors serving as trusted connectors between communities and decision-makers and fostering trust, inclusion and cohesion in divided or unequal urban areas. They convene dialogue among diverse actors, including authorities, youth, the private sector, the media and academia, around shared resilience goals, transforming fragmented efforts into unified citywide efforts to reduce vulnerabilities and risks and to build stronger capacities, including coordination, complementarity, preparedness and readiness.

Investing in providing city branches with political insight and the capacity to navigate urban power dynamics enables them to deliver locally relevant, impactful services. This strengthens the positioning of urban priorities within economic agendas and drives measurable, tangible actions to reduce risks and vulnerabilities.

4. Prioritize trust-building and impact delivery to achieve operational excellence

In contexts of urban fragility, significant time investment is required to ensure stakeholders understand the principles and value-driven role of National Societies in achieving operational excellence. In such settings, enhancing visibility, respect for the Red Cross and Red Crescent identity and the promotion of principled humanitarian action is as critical as consistently delivering high-quality, neutral, impartial and independent community-centred services, underpinned by deep knowledge, proven expertise and a strong capacity to connect with diverse urban actors.

Building reliable local capacity and demonstrating competence in complex city environments forms the foundation of recognition and trust from municipalities and community stakeholders.

5. Embrace and expand inclusive and adaptive urban volunteering

National Societies expand volunteering opportunities through flexible modalities, such as community-based volunteers, digital volunteers, subject-matter experts, youth-led initiatives and micro-volunteering, while ensuring skills development and volunteer safety, recognition and wellbeing. These elements are essential to fostering long-term pathways for participation in urban resilience.

A particularly strategic approach is to create volunteering opportunities for people living in highly vulnerable settings, where the likelihood of disasters or crises demands significant support and contributions from local communities. This approach strengthens access, acceptance and participation from within the communities themselves and enhances social cohesion and representation.

6. Invest in strengthening capacity to build strategic partnerships for scaled impact

Urban environments demand multi-stakeholder partnerships, starting with urban communities themselves. The involvement of city authorities is essential to ensure political will, access, safety and security, and such engagement must be grounded in value-based partnerships. The communities most at risk should transition from being passive recipients of assistance to engaging as active partners in resilience-building, positioning themselves as essential stakeholders in the development and implementation of sustainable solutions.

The private sector is equally important, both for business continuity and socio-economic responsibility. Civil society organizations play a major role in the highly diverse and specialized urban context, making coordination and collaboration with them essential to increase efficiency and effectiveness. Continued and ethical engagement with media and communication channels, whether structured, official formats (formal communication) or interactive, community-driven spaces (social media), remains critical to ensuring accurate and truthful information that facilitates disaster response and resilience-building. These partnerships must be action-oriented and equitable and should lead to concrete measures that improve the living conditions of urban communities.

7. Future-proof and scale risk-informed urban services

National Societies optimize and future-proof their conventional services by integrating climate adaptation, anticipatory action and nature-based solutions to address growing urban vulnerabilities.

Recognizing that urban risk management extends beyond disaster risk reduction, city branches must apply multi-hazard analysis and approaches that encompass health and water security, societal vulnerabilities, migration and displacement and that effectively tackle pressures arising from inequality, marginalization, lack of cohesion and insecurity.

At the same time, National Societies should reinforce existing services for urban environments, such as clinics, blood centres, laboratories, first aid and rehabilitation services, by making them resilient to disasters and crises. This includes leveraging human resource expertise to adapt their services for emergency response, such as deploying field hospitals, mobile clinics and home-based care. Flexibility, adaptability and innovation are crucial components for future-proofing these services.

8. Build skills to unlock and drive innovation in urban humanitarian finance and resourcing

National Societies complement traditional grant-based funding with innovative approaches to resourcing, such as blended finance, city-level investment opportunities, private-sector funding, impact investment and insurance mechanisms. By building competence in accessing new and diverse forms of resourcing and dialoguing with key and emerging actors in this space, such as National Society city branches, it is possible to secure predictable resources for urban resilience while safeguarding humanitarian values and independence.

9. Mainstream systems thinking across urban action

National Societies integrate urban resilience as a core lens across all strategies and operations, systematically addressing inequalities, interconnected risks and future shocks and assessing their relevance in tackling urban challenges.

City branches develop the capacity to identify appropriate levels of intervention within complex urban ecosystems, recognizing that impact often extends beyond worst-case risk scenarios. By aligning service delivery with urban planning and leveraging research, data and foresight, they can anticipate risks and collaborate with stakeholders to reduce vulnerabilities and strengthen preparedness and readiness for major disasters and crises.

Connecting community action with municipal systems is key to shifting from reactive support to proactive, citywide resilience-building.

10. Place data, insight and evidence at the heart of urban decision-making

National Societies invest in research and data partnerships with universities, technology companies, social entrepreneurs and local governments to build evidence that informs programming and advocacy. By documenting both successful and unsuccessful practices, they strengthen their influence on urban policy and planning.

National Society city branches are strengthened with digital, technical and organizational capabilities and by means of knowledge-sharing through peer exchange and global sharing platforms. By accelerating collective learning, the membership grows as a connected, adaptive network ready for complex urban challenges.

11. Harness and leverage humanitarian diplomacy for transformation

National Societies expand and deepen their humanitarian diplomacy capital and skills to influence urban policy and planning, ensuring that resilience, equity and inclusion are recognized as shared responsibilities.

They engage not only as responders but as strategic partners who help shape how cities prepare for, manage and recover from shocks and crises. This elevates National Societies from operational partners to brokers of dialogue and standard-setters in local leadership and governance. National Societies remain impartial and neutral in a political setting, focusing on adding value with each interaction.

12. Champion youth engagement and leadership

National Societies nurture a culture of curiosity and creativity, empowering youth and volunteers to co-design and test new solutions. They champion bold experimentation – valuing both success and failure as opportunities for learning – and partner with academia and private-sector innovators to scale impact.

Proven, effective innovations must translate into actions that have universal value rather than individual recognition. They should be widely adopted and promoted to help urban communities become more resilient.

13. Set targets matching the challenges and track progress for resilient cities

National Societies measure and report the impact of their work on urban resilience-building, actively seeking feedback from the people we serve. Supported by the IFRC, National Societies identify their capacities and most pressing needs to advance these principles and develop action plans suitable for their particular context. The targets set will be regularly reviewed as ambitions, knowledge and capacity grow. Achieving our vision will require shifts in mindset and approach and the allocation of the necessary resources, supported by a collective effort throughout implementation.