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Strengthening the resilience of urban communities

Principles of Action

DRAFT ZERO RESOLUTION

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DRAFT ZERO RESOLUTION

Strengthening the resilience of urban communities

Principles of Action

The Council of Delegates,

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, deepening social inequality and polarization, the lack of urban planning and management in some countries, the spread of haphazard construction and planning and the failure to comply with environmental and building regulations, 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 determine the main areas that require action and investment, in accordance with our mandate and principles.

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

recalling the Council of Delegates resolution “Strengthening the resilience of urban communities: Our way forward” adopted in 2022, *reaffirming* 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 and *recalling* that action by the Movement to prevent and respond to the humanitarian impacts of war in cities is governed by the 2022 Council of Delegates resolution on war in cities and its annexed Movement Action Plan and the 2024 resolution and solemn appeal on war in cities,

recognizing that urban communities increasingly face multiple interconnected risks – including climate change, disasters, extreme weather events (e.g. extreme heat and the associated health, livelihood and social impacts), environmental degradation, rapid and unplanned urbanization, public health crises, displacement, migration, social exclusion, growing conflict and violence in urban environments, the increase in unmet basic needs in the most impoverished and excluded communities, precarious access to essential goods and services, corruption and the weakening of democratic systems – which disproportionately affect people already at risk,

acknowledging that building resilience in urban settings requires comprehensive, coordinated and inclusive approaches, understood as a set of interrelated decisions, actions and processes in all areas of public policy, aimed at reducing inequality and vulnerability, rooted in community leadership and supported by partnerships with local and national authorities, civil society,

academia and the private sector, to promote quality of life in urban areas and resolve social problems,

recalling that urban resilience is integral to the Movement's work, an anchoring factor in humanitarian action to protect life and dignity and alleviate human suffering "wherever it may be found", which increasingly means dense, risk-exposed cities. The principles of humanity, impartiality and universality, in particular, require National Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (National Societies) to address the specific vulnerabilities of urban populations to disasters, climate impacts and inequality, making long-term urban risk reduction and resilience building a core expression of their identity,

recalling also the key role of National Societies as auxiliaries to the public authorities in the humanitarian field and their added value in reaching and working with the most vulnerable and *recognizing* the auxiliary role as a foundation for principled engagement with authorities to strengthen urban resilience,

emphasizing that strengthening urban resilience contributes to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals, the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015–2030 and the New Urban Agenda and *underlining* that National Societies are in a unique position and have the potential to contribute to helping urban communities, thanks to their local presence and their role as auxiliaries to the public authorities,

noting that, in fulfillment of the 2022 Council of Delegates mandate, 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,

adopts the Principles of Action (Annex 1) as the core framework for guiding the implementation of this resolution across the Movement;

encourages all National Societies to approach and work in collaboration with national and municipal authorities, civil society, academia, the private sector and their own city-level networks, with a view to promoting broader adoption of the Principles of Action and supporting their operationalization;

calls upon National Societies to continue strengthening their auxiliary status vis-à-vis public authorities and to build on existing instruments to ensure strengthened engagement and partnerships at all levels, including at the municipal level, so as to support the implementation of the Principles of Action;

requests all National Societies, supported by the IFRC and the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), in accordance with their mandates, operational priorities, context and capacities, to systematically integrate these Principles of Action into their operating models, strategies, programmes and partnerships, building on existing preparedness mechanisms, including the National Society Preparedness Framework and the Preparedness for Effective Response approach;

invites all National Societies to lead and/or support inclusive processes within their own organizations at community and city levels to contextualize and operationalize the Principles of Action, creating the conditions required to ensure the true and effective participation of vulnerable and at-risk groups as well as other community actors providing support to urban populations;

encourages National Societies to prioritize engagement with municipal authorities and States and Movement partners to support National Societies in this endeavour, with a view to paving

the way for the endorsement of the Principles of Action at the 35th International Conference of the Red Cross and Red Crescent (International Conference), as a key step in aligning relevant regulatory frameworks and policies and unlocking resources and investment to build resilience in urban environments, in accordance with the Fundamental Principles;

requests the IFRC to support National Societies with an operational framework for the mainstreaming of the Principles of Action 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.

Annex 1

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

Preamble – Towards a resilient urban future

Humanity is rapidly urbanizing. 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 areas of 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. Cities and towns are at the forefront of climate change, and they are where its impacts are felt most acutely and persistently and where critical opportunities exist to drive mitigation, advance adaptation and strengthen place-based resilience.

The risks that come with living in urban environments and the pressures posed by the scale and impact of urban disasters will increase in tandem with 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 characterized by fragility, political instability, and development and growth and between urban areas with a high, medium or low availability of essential services.

This involves understanding the external pressures affecting urban environments and 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 a 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, enhancing the influence and positioning of National Societies as relevant actors with a multi-hazard risk lens and identifying service gaps that lead to the exclusion and marginalization of at-risk groups, such as women and girls, children and youth, migrants, refugees, people with disabilities and Indigenous populations. 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. This requires early, continuous and meaningful engagement with impacted communities, prioritizing inclusive consultation, proactive trust building and the integration of community perspectives into all stages of planning and decision-making.

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, ensuring 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. Accelerate readiness and effective urban action through collaboration

National Societies play a central role in strengthening urban preparedness by acting as trusted connectors between communities, authorities, the private sector and other key stakeholders. By building and maintaining strong dialogue and relationships with city officials, political actors and opinion leaders, they help ensure a shared understanding of humanitarian principles and secure the support needed for effective action.

Through pre-established agreements and partnerships (including with city authorities, with the financial sector to enable rapid cash assistance and with the private sector to support business continuity), National Societies help create the conditions for timely, coordinated and scalable responses. Engagement with media and community influencers further reinforces trust, inclusion and public confidence before, during and after crises.

In increasingly complex urban environments, where risks are interconnected and crises often overlap, preparedness must go hand in hand with strong response capacity. National Societies bring together diverse actors – such as authorities, youth, academia and businesses – to align efforts around shared resilience goals, transforming fragmented initiatives into cohesive, city-wide approaches.

By grounding their work in local realities and fostering collaboration across sectors, National Societies enable more adaptive, inclusive and effective responses to the cascading and compounding crises that characterize urban settings today.

2. Excel at community engagement, tailored to the characteristics of urban communities, to secure cohesion, inclusion and meaningful participation

National Societies recognize and leverage the unique characteristics and dynamics of urban communities to adapt their services to evolving needs. This requires flexible, adaptive and context-specific approaches that reflect urban diversity, using risk assessments, stakeholder mapping and community feedback systems to ensure that all actions remain inclusive, legitimate and community driven. As traditional community bonds tend to be looser and urban communities form along different identities, not just geographical boundaries, National Societies must be aware of and well equipped to identify and address the specific vulnerabilities of urban populations as well as the unique insights and contributions each group can bring to the process of building resilience.

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, 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, city-wide efforts to reduce vulnerabilities and risks

and to build stronger capacities, including coordination, complementarity, preparedness and readiness.

National Societies, through city branches, assert their roles as key humanitarian and development actors, shaping policies, influencing investment priorities and bridging humanitarian and political spheres. Investing in the political insight of National Society city branches and their capacity to navigate urban power dynamics enables them to deliver locally relevant, impactful services. By engaging confidently in urban governance and planning processes, branches ensure that humanitarian principles guide sustainable urban transformation and that National Society leadership shapes key decisions 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 that political and security actors, the traditional media and other influence groups understand the auxiliary role in the humanitarian field as well as the principles and value-driven role of National Societies in achieving operational excellence. In such settings, visibility, respect for the Red Cross and Red Crescent identity and the promotion and application of principled humanitarian action are as critical as the consistent delivery of 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.

It is particularly important strategically 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 that accurate and truthful information 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

Recognizing that urban risk management extends beyond disaster risk reduction, National Society city branches must apply multi-hazard analysis and approaches that encompass health (including mental health and psychosocial support), water security, societal vulnerabilities, migration and displacement and effectively tackle pressures arising from inequality, marginalization, lack of cohesion and insecurity. Furthermore, National Societies need to optimize and future-proof their conventional services by integrating climate adaptation, anticipatory action and nature-based solutions to address growing urban vulnerabilities.

At the same time, National Societies should reinforce existing services for urban environments, such as clinics, blood centres, laboratories, and 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 by 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. 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, will 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.

National Society 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, city-wide 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 the development of digital, technical and organizational capabilities and knowledge sharing through peer exchange and global sharing platforms. By accelerating collective learning, National Societies grow together 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 dialogue brokers 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.

Strengthening the role of National Societies as auxiliaries to their public authorities in the humanitarian field helps position them as a partner of choice in addressing urban vulnerabilities and reducing exposure to hazards and risks. Realizing this potential depends on fostering robust relationships and enabling a legal and regulatory environment that supports inclusive whole-of-government and whole-of-society approaches. To this end, National Societies should expand and deepen their humanitarian diplomacy and legislative advocacy capacities, including through the development of advocacy strategies and engagement plans. National Societies should leverage their auxiliary role to regularly engage with their public authorities to ensure a clear understanding of this role and advocate for comprehensive national legal and regulatory frameworks that provide for coordination across all levels of government and formally recognize and facilitate the auxiliary role. These frameworks and consistent engagement, in turn, enable trusted and effective partnerships with local authorities and communities. National Societies should similarly leverage their auxiliary role to influence urban policy and planning processes, strengthening legal preparedness for urban action.

Furthermore, maintaining relationships and formalizing cooperation through memoranda of understanding or other agreements with urban authorities can help to clarify roles and responsibilities, strengthen public authorities' understanding of the auxiliary role and ensure that National Societies are able to act and operate in accordance with the Fundamental Principles at all times.

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, specifically leveraging social entrepreneurship both at the National Society and community level.

As the intersection of social entrepreneurship and resilience is emerging as a promising avenue for driving sustainable change in an era marked by dynamic challenges and evolving community needs, championing youth and volunteer engagement and leadership through social entrepreneurship should be widely adopted and promoted to help urban communities become more resilient and National Societies more financially sustainable.

Closing note: Set targets matching the challenges and track progress for resilient cities

Operationalization of the above Principles of Action will require National Societies to 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 will identify their capacities and most pressing needs to advance these principles and develop action plans suitable for their particular context, with realistic and achievable targets. These targets will be regularly reviewed as ambitions, knowledge and capacity grow. Achieving our vision will require shifts in mindset and approach and the allocation of necessary resources, supported by collective efforts throughout implementation.