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Reaffirming the role of the Movement as a factor of peace

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PROGRESS REPORT

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PROGRESS REPORT

Reaffirming the role of the Movement as a factor of peace

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Council of Delegates resolution “[Reaffirming the role of the Movement as a factor of peace](#)” (CD/24/R7), drawing on and recalling the long history of the Movement’s reflections on and contributions to peace, seeks to renew and strengthen the efforts of the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement (Movement) to prevent and resolve conflict, and achieve sustainable peace as the most effective way to reduce the human suffering caused by war. Each component of the Movement has a role to play, and together their combined efforts are an important contribution to prospects for peace in conflict-affected settings.

All of the Movement’s work is undertaken with the aim of protecting and promoting respect for human dignity – the essential goal of humanitarian action and the foundation for sustainable peace. The Movement’s everyday activities – promotion of the humanitarian principles and spirit of humanity, dissemination of international humanitarian law (IHL), community resilience actions, youth engagement, protection of family links, health services and more – all make important contributions to prospects for peace at the community, national and international level. In addition to this regular work, however, more targeted efforts have been launched to better leverage the Movement’s capacity to contribute to peace in light of the extraordinary challenges of current times, characterized by an ever-increasing number of conflicts and the unmanageable humanitarian needs they create. It is these targeted efforts that are the primary focus of the report.

The [International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies \(IFRC\)](#) envisions inclusive, resilient communities where diversity is celebrated and dialogue overcomes division. Recognizing that inequality erodes social cohesion, we foster trust and solidarity through community resilience initiatives and intergenerational dialogue. By nurturing these spaces, we build the foundations for peaceful coexistence, stronger relationships and sustainable peace across all levels of society. The IFRC’s Generation Peace initiative serves as the overarching framework for its engagement on peace, operationalizing the commitments set out in the Movement’s resolution on peace and the outcomes of the Movement Symposium on Peace. It seeks to advance peace by harnessing the energy and innovation of young people along with the experience and wisdom of older volunteers through intergenerational dialogue. Grounded in trust-building, community-led action, the initiative demonstrates how peace can be promoted through existing programmes. Its six thematic workstreams¹ illustrate practical, cross-sectoral approaches that strengthen social cohesion, foster inclusion, build community trust and support locally defined solutions to conflict and vulnerability.

The International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) has continued its targeted efforts across its protection dialogue, operations and influencing efforts to amplify its contributions to prospects for peace. Since the adoption of the resolution, this has included operational research that has led to a number of publications – a public policy report on humanitarian action and peace, an issue of the *International Review of the Red Cross* (IRRC) on IHL and peace, targeted guidance documents and studies on the practices of parties to conflict in relation to missing persons – which all strengthen the evidence base for influencing efforts and

¹ Water and Peace; Climate and Resilience; Education; Protection, Gender and Inclusion (PGI); Community Engagement and Accountability; and Limitless.

more intentional operational approaches. In operations, the ICRC has advanced work to protect access to essential services, including water, health and education, to mainstream gender and diversity into programming and to maintain the important work of the Central Tracing Agency (CTA). It also continues to play its neutral intermediary role to support dialogue between parties to conflict on humanitarian matters. In addition, the [Global Initiative to Galvanize Political Commitment for IHL \(GIHL\)](#) includes a dedicated workstream on IHL and peace, which is an important complement to the Movement's broader work on peace.

Finally, the Movement created spaces in which to explore individual and collective possibilities for contributing to peace. With the support of the Norwegian Red Cross, the IFRC organized a Movement Symposium on Peace in 2025, where contemporary practices were shared and open discussions facilitated further reflections on the future of the Movement's peace efforts. This event also included an intergenerational dialogue with youth from selected organizations and other Symposium participants.

1) INTRODUCTION

The 2024 Council of Delegates was an important opportunity to reaffirm the role of the Movement as a factor of peace, reminding us all that the Movement's motto *per humanitatem ad pacem* ("through humanity to peace") is, in effect, a call to action for lasting peace through the Movement's diverse activities at the global, national and community level. At least 90 countries are experiencing polycrises, characterized by economic, social, political, environmental and humanitarian challenges. The cumulative effects are pushing millions deeper into poverty and vulnerability while exacerbating conditions that can lead to further violence and instability.

Conflicts are not inevitable. The surest way to address the suffering they cause is to invest in peace by ending conflicts or preventing them from breaking out in the first place. Yet the number of conflicts globally is trending upward; the ICRC has identified over 130 ongoing armed conflicts worldwide. Conflicts are more protracted and internationalized, are taking an increasingly severe toll on civilians and have become harder to end. Increasing polarization and geopolitical tensions point to the likelihood that existing conflicts will intensify and raise fears over the risk of additional large-scale armed conflict. Military spending continues to rise around the world, and public narratives which focus on competition and the potential for conflict further amplify fear and divisions.

At the same time, we see the apparent weakening or failure of existing multilateral, bilateral and private efforts aimed at preventing or resolving these conflicts. In some cases, there does not appear to be the political will to even try to resolve disputes. Indeed, humanitarian organizations often end up managing the impacts of protracted conflicts in the absence of the means or will to achieve sustainable political solutions.

Peace has been a regular subject of consideration by the Movement. Since 1921, some 95 resolutions related to peace have been adopted by the Council of Delegates and the International Conference of the Red Cross and Red Crescent (International Conference). All of the Movement's work is undertaken with the aim of protecting and promoting respect for human dignity. This is the essential goal of humanitarian action; it is also the foundation for sustainable peace. At this time of rising tensions and profound geopolitical shifts, the Movement must continue to strive to meet the challenges it faces as the world's largest humanitarian network, building on the spirit of the 2024 resolution. It must serve as a reminder that there are alternatives to war and call for renewed investment in peace, reaffirming our collective commitment to humanity and dignity and our hope for a more peaceful world.

2) ANALYSIS/PROGRESS

The activities described below are grouped to reflect the substance of the resolution.

A) LEGAL, RESEARCH AND INFLUENCING EFFORTS

To better understand and articulate the connections between humanitarian action and peace, a growing area of reflection in the humanitarian and peace sectors, the ICRC completed operational research in three countries, complemented by historical and social science research. The resulting public report [Through Humanity to Peace](#) was released in November 2025 and considers the ICRC's experience in contributing to peace, including work carried out in partnership with National Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (National Societies). The report draws broad conclusions about the ways humanitarian actors can further their contributions in light of the evidence and recommendations put forward by communities, Movement staff, local and international experts and others interviewed. The report is being used to call on States to reinvest in conflict resolution and prevention mechanisms, which are being undermined in the current environment of increased geopolitical competition and polarization. It is also being used to encourage humanitarians to further leverage their own potential contributions to prospects for peace and stimulate informed partnership between humanitarians and peace actors. The report has spurred further internal reflections within the ICRC about how the organization can best leverage the neutral intermediary role in support of prospects for peace, which is highlighted as an objective in its most recent Institutional Strategy.

To further contribute to these influencing efforts, an issue of the *IRRC* entitled [IHL & Peace](#) was publicly launched in November 2025. It captures the international legal aspects of this conversation, including lessons learned from past national practice. Finally, Workstream 3 of the GIIHL "IHL and Peace" (co-chaired by Bangladesh, Colombia, Ethiopia, Qatar and Saudi Arabia, with the ICRC) explores how respect for IHL can help reduce human suffering and preserve pathways to peace before, during and after armed conflict. The outcome document will be an important tool that Movement components can leverage to advocate with authorities on the need to respect and ensure respect for IHL. As part of this workstream, three high-level panel discussions (in Geneva and Saudi Arabia), four roundtables and expert workshops (in Qatar, Colombia, South Africa and Ethiopia) and five all-State consultations were held. Switzerland and the ICRC are to co-host a global IHL dialogue on 3–4 November 2026 in Geneva to present and discuss the substantive outcomes.

The ICRC and National Societies contributed to focusing the workstream on humanitarian action and the Movement's long-standing commitment to the motto *per humanitatem ad pacem*. The workstream also highlights the role that National Societies can play, in line with their mandates and capacities, in areas such as IHL dissemination, preparedness, community-level resilience, tracing, support to families of missing persons, support to detainees and releasees, child protection, displacement and returns, and other activities that can reduce suffering and ensure the conditions for recovery.

The IFRC has partnered with the Peace Research Institute Oslo to help shape and advance the six thematic workstreams of its Generation Peace initiative, particularly through youth engagement activities such as Limitless Peace, led by the Solferino Academy. This collaboration has laid the foundation for a broader peace movement. Since October 2025, the IFRC and four like-minded organizations have come together to build a coalition for peace, contributing complementary strengths, expertise and a shared commitment to fostering more peaceful and resilient societies.

The Andorran Red Cross, the Costa Rican Red Cross and the IFRC are establishing a network of National Societies in demilitarized and neutral countries as a collaborative platform bringing together National Societies, academic institutions and global knowledge partners from

countries with a tradition of neutrality and demilitarization. The initiative seeks to strengthen humanitarian contributions to peace by promoting dialogue, research and knowledge exchange on neutrality, humanitarian diplomacy and conflict prevention. By 2028, the initiative aims to generate a recognized body of research on neutrality and humanitarian diplomacy, strengthen the Movement's contribution to global peace and security discussions and facilitate initial governmental dialogue on enhanced cooperation among neutral States.

B) YOUTH, VOLUNTEERS AND EDUCATION

IFRC Light in the Darkness, launched in June 2026, is the flagship global initiative of Generation Peace designed to mobilize young people, individuals, communities and partners around a shared vision of peace and to encourage action to help build the conditions for peaceful societies. Inspired by the humanitarian legacy of Solferino, it will connect local peacebuilding initiatives to transform the acts of hope of individuals and communities into collective action, with recorded reflections that can serve to amplify their voices in their communities, countries and globally for humanitarian diplomacy. It will also promote intergenerational dialogue, collective action and advocacy for peace. The campaign combines community-based engagement with global digital mobilization and high-level advocacy through torchlight vigils, storytelling events, community peace circles, an interactive digital platform, National Society activities that contribute to building the conditions for peace in communities and a symbolic relay from Solferino to Geneva. By bringing together National Societies, youth networks, public institutions, interfaith organizations and international partners, Light in the Darkness aims to amplify local voices and showcase youth- and community-led peace initiatives. It also aims to institutionalize regular intergenerational dialogues at the local, national, regional and global level with a view to understanding peace from the perspective of different generations and exploring what unites individuals and communities to achieve greater harmony, solidarity and collaboration. By the end of 2028, the campaign aims to engage more than one million people, generate hundreds of policy commitments, deliver impactful initiatives that reach millions and launch and secure endorsement of a Global Generation Peace Declaration at the International Conference.

IFRC Limitless Peace is a global youth leadership and innovation initiative launched in February 2026 and led by the IFRC Solferino Academy, which seeks to empower young people to become agents of peace in their communities. It aims to equip young Red Cross and Red Crescent volunteers with the skills, mentorship and resources needed to develop locally driven peacebuilding initiatives, recognizing young people as leaders in addressing the root causes of division, exclusion and violence. The initiative involves a four-phase innovation journey, supporting participants through the process from identification of community challenges, design of innovative solutions, prototype development and project strengthening and scaling through to long-term implementation. Throughout the programme, young innovators receive training, mentoring, seed funding and access to a global network of experts, universities and partners, enabling them to test, refine and expand locally led peace initiatives while fostering collaboration across the Movement. Limitless Peace aims to reach 10,000 young people from 150+ countries and to support at least 1,000 innovative peacebuilding initiatives worldwide with the support of the IFRC, RIVET and Dubai International Humanitarian Aid and Development (DIHAD).

RED Education advances education as a pathway to peace by strengthening equitable access to inclusive, quality education and embedding social and emotional learning, resilience and peace education into safe and supportive learning environments. Through a conflict-sensitive approach, RED Education seeks to address underlying drivers of violence and exclusion while promoting the development of ethical leadership among children and young people so that they become agents of positive behavioural change, non-violence and peace within their communities. Building on the work of 76 National Societies already supporting access to education, the initiative is developing a comprehensive curriculum package for teachers and Red Cross and Red Crescent educators that covers risk reduction, resilience, social and

emotional learning and peace education. Drawing on established methodologies, such as Youth as Agents of Behavioural Change and the Children's Resilience Programme, the initiative strengthens the capacities of educators and volunteers to foster dialogue, empathy, critical thinking, non-violent communication and conflict resolution. RED Education aims to support 40 million children, adolescents and young adults across 100 countries by 2030.

The ICRC recognizes the role of conflict-sensitive education in fostering safer and more stable societies by strengthening social cohesion and supporting conflict resolution and peacebuilding, which ultimately reduces the risk of future conflicts. In this regard, it organized a meeting in Colombia in 2025 with the theme "Education as a Pathway to Peace" under the IHL and Peace workstream of the GIIHL. Several recommendations from the meeting were incorporated into the workstream's outcome document. In its protection dialogue, the ICRC engages with parties to armed conflict on safeguarding education under IHL, underlining their obligation to facilitate access to education during armed conflict and to protect schools and other educational facilities as civilian objects. This has led, in some contexts, to the relocation of military installations away from schools, and some non-State armed groups have issued directives for the protection of schools in areas under their control. The ICRC also engages with States on the protection of education, notably through the [Safe Schools Declaration](#) and its associated Guidelines. It published its [Commentary on the "Guidelines for Protecting Schools and Universities from Military Use During Armed Conflict"](#) in 2025 to foster greater compliance with IHL protecting education during armed conflict, encourage broader endorsement of the Safe Schools Declaration and support the effective implementation of the Guidelines in specific contexts.

Protecting essential infrastructure and the environment can reduce the material cost of war, making socio-economic recovery more likely. It can also help people remain in their homes if they choose to, thereby reducing displacement. Together, these effects foster stability and help deliver peace dividends, something explored further in the GIIHL workstream "Protection of Civilian Infrastructure". In its protection dialogue, the ICRC engages with parties to armed conflict and States on the protection of essential infrastructure under IHL. In parallel, it works to ensure safe access to essential services, integrates conflict sensitivity and protection analysis into its operations so that its impact on a community does not exacerbate tensions and grievances and, where possible, strengthens existing social bonds. The ICRC's conflict-sensitive operations continue to support safe access to clean water for millions of people affected by conflict in 35 countries around the world.

As part of the IFRC Generation Peace initiative, the H2O PEACE Programme, implemented by the Iran, Jordan and Yemen Red Crescent Societies, combines conflict-sensitive water programming with peacebuilding to strengthen water governance, improve access to safe water and foster dialogue and cooperation around shared water resources in fragile and conflict-affected settings. By addressing both immediate water needs and the underlying drivers of resource-related tensions, the programme strengthens community resilience and social cohesion. Since its inception, it has helped National Societies develop conflict-sensitive tools and governance mechanisms, trained water authorities in integrated water resource management and established water–peace committees to support community-led dialogue and decision-making. It also rehabilitated water infrastructure in Sana'a and Taiz, Yemen, restoring safe water access for approximately 189,000 people and fostering cooperation around shared water resources. The next phase will expand across Iran, Jordan and additional governorates in Yemen, combining water infrastructure rehabilitation with strengthened community water governance and peacebuilding. By the end of 2027, the programme aims to directly benefit approximately 570,000 people and indirectly reach around 4 million people across the three countries.

The IFRC is working with partners such as the World YMCA, JA Worldwide and other youth organizations to build a coalition aimed at unleashing the leadership potential of young people to cultivate a culture of peace that transforms communities. The coalition is aiming to equip

230 million young people with the practical skills needed to transform everyday peace into impact by 2035. It will leverage what each partner does best and pool these strengths to achieve what no one can do alone. The coalition will strengthen existing programmes and seek new opportunities for collaboration, fundraising and advocacy.

In terms of external engagement, four events were organized over the reporting period: one during World Water Week in Stockholm; another at the conference “Climate resilience pathways: Water security and WASH in Asia Pacific” held in Bangkok; and two at AidEx in Nairobi and Geneva. Some of them were co-organized with the Geneva Water Hub. At these events, the ICRC and the IFRC shared field experiences that leverage water as a catalyst for peace, citing examples in places such as Goma, Ukraine and Marawi. The objective of these conferences was to demonstrate how water can become a powerful entry point for transformation, trust-building and long-term resilience across the humanitarian–development–peace continuum.

C) PROTECTION, GENDER AND SOCIAL INCLUSION

Addressing the distinct vulnerabilities of people impacted by conflict, disasters and other crises is critical to the effectiveness and accountability of humanitarian action and a necessary condition for it to contribute to sustainable peace. Steady progress has been made in strengthening institutional capacity and operational coherence across the Movement to ensure that humanitarian action is people-centric, safe, impartial, inclusive and trusted while addressing discrimination and exclusion both internally and in operations.

The Movement continues to strengthen its capacities to cohesively protect and assist people in need during crises, drawing on the complementary mandates and expertise of its components. With the 2024 Council of Delegates resolution “Protection in the Movement: Improving our collective impact in protecting people”, the Movement Protection Framework now acts as a common ground for the components of the Movement to advance together to achieve better protection outcomes. It articulates core protection principles (do no harm) and action, key elements of safeguarding and Protection, Gender and Inclusion (PGI) policies and standards as well as our duty of care. A 2026–2030 Roadmap for Protection in the Movement has been jointly designed by the Norwegian Red Cross, the IFRC and the ICRC, following a Movement-wide consultation process, to guide its implementation.

Moreover, the consistent integration of PGI Minimum Standards into emergency operations has further improved the quality, safety and inclusiveness of humanitarian assistance. Safeguarding systems continue to expand, with more National Societies adopting policies and implementing action plans to prevent sexual exploitation, abuse and harassment and to strengthen child safeguarding. The ICRC continues to prioritize its engagement with the Movement on protection matters and adopted its Gender, Diversity and Inclusion Policy at the end of 2024, reflecting an integrated approach similar to that set out in the IFRC Protection, Gender and Inclusion Policy. A total of 72 National Societies have also adopted a policy on protection from sexual exploitation and abuse. Ongoing support to National Societies through policy development, peer learning and technical assistance has strengthened capacities across key protection areas, including child protection, gender-based violence prevention, disability inclusion and community-based protection.

Finally, GLOW Red, the global network for women leaders in the Movement, continues to foster women’s leadership and peer support and learning. Women’s leadership and full and meaningful participation in all areas of life has been clearly linked to prospects for sustainable peace, including inside the Movement itself.

D) PROTECTING FAMILY LINKS AND ADDRESSING THE ISSUE OF THE MISSING AND THE DEAD

The resolution clearly recognizes the value of humanitarian activities related to the missing and the dead, tracing and family reunification in promoting reconciliation and dialogue between communities and between States. Since its adoption, additional research has been published in the *IRRC* to further develop the evidence base, highlighting the importance of giving attention to the question of the missing in formal and informal peace processes, and new [Guidance for Mediators](#) was published by the ICRC CTA to support the inclusion of this critical topic in negotiation processes.

The Family Links Network, led by the ICRC CTA in cooperation with 191 National Societies, continues to play a key role in carrying out activities for the separated, missing and dead. The ICRC's engagement with States as part of conflict preparedness efforts has focused on preparation for detention operations, management of battlefield dead (land and sea) and processes to account for protected persons and prevent people from going missing. The CTA has continued to engage with States, either directly or through delegations, to strengthen processes to account for protected persons and coordination in international armed conflicts, through four multi-country workshops held around the world. Through its global Military Personnel Identification Project, the ICRC has introduced medicolegal and forensic best practices in the armed forces for preventing soldiers from becoming unaccounted for and ensuring the professional handling of cases of soldiers killed in action. The CTA is also providing tools to help delegations engage with peace actors to ensure that the issue of missing persons is addressed as a key humanitarian concern in mediation. This includes the new guidance note "Ensuring complementarity in the search for and investigation of cases of missing persons, including victims of enforced disappearances".

Finally, building on in-depth research and consultation, the ICRC presented a study entitled [Non-state armed groups and the separated, missing and dead: Obligations under international humanitarian law and examples of how to implement them](#), drawing on concrete examples from the practice of 64 non-State armed groups. On the occasion of the publication of this report in March 2026, the ICRC hosted a hybrid event to discuss practical steps that non-State armed groups can take to prevent families from being separated and people from going missing and to ensure the dead are treated with dignity, in line with their obligations under IHL. An issue of the *IRRC* entitled [Protection of the Dead](#) was also published in November 2025. Contributions in this issue reflect on the deeper layers of ethics, values, culture and religion underpinning the legal rules that provide for protection of the dignity of the dead. By treating the dead, no matter who they were in life, in a dignified manner, parties to an armed conflict contribute to upholding humanity in war. Ultimately, this can help build trust and find pathways to peace between those who have inflicted death upon each other during war.

The IFRC has integrated Restoring Family Links (RFL) into its core emergency response mechanisms by including dedicated funding for National Society RFL activities in Disaster Response Emergency Fund (DREF) allocations and emergency appeals. This institutionalized approach ensures that RFL is considered an essential humanitarian service from the onset of a crisis.

E) FURTHER EXPLORING MOVEMENT CONTRIBUTIONS

The Movement Symposium on Peace, organized by the IFRC and the Norwegian Red Cross, was held in Geneva on 18–19 November 2025. Contemporary practices were shared, and open discussions facilitated further reflections on the future of the Movement's efforts in this respect. Representatives of Interpeace, the YMCA and a Swiss university were invited to share reflections on the role of the Movement, and presentations were made by the National Societies of Sudan, Myanmar and Honduras and by the ICRC and the IFRC to showcase work

being carried out nationally and globally as examples of good practice and to stimulate further reflection. It was agreed that, moving forward, regional gatherings would be considered to better connect Movement components grappling with similar regional conflicts and dynamics, promote joined-up efforts to address them and allow greater levels of participation from across the Movement.

In furtherance of this commitment, the IFRC and the Italian Red Cross organized a major peace conference in Solferino, Italy, during the annual torchlight procession, known as the Fiaccolata. Bringing together 100 senior leaders from 60 National Societies, the event provided a platform for exploring emerging societal issues that undermine peace, inclusion and equity and for defining the specific roles National Societies must perform and the concrete actions they must take to build the conditions for lasting peace.

3) CONCLUSION

These initiatives have diverse objectives, timeframes and targets, and implementation will continue beyond 2028. Since they are, in many cases, connected to existing monitoring frameworks (within institutional strategies, internal policy accountability processes, etc.), no additional monitoring framework is proposed here.

The resolution has allowed the Movement to refocus and reinvigorate its unique contribution to prospects for peace at a time of increased division and polarization. The initiatives outlined here should be seen as complementary to the ongoing work of the Movement to improve respect for the human dignity of every individual affected by conflict and crisis, respect for IHL and the promotion of humanitarian principles which are core components of the Movement's everyday work that contribute to peace through the humanitarian mission.