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Principled and accountable use of information and communication technologies in humanitarian action

DRAFT RESOLUTION

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DRAFT RESOLUTION

Principled and accountable use of information and communication technologies in humanitarian action

The Council of Delegates,

understanding that the world is becoming more digitized, that information and communication technologies (ICTs) encompass multiple concepts, systems, and processes, that data and digital technology have permeated most aspects of life, that some technologies such as artificial intelligence (AI) can fundamentally reshape how people, organizations, and States work, transact, collaborate, and engage with one another, and that governance and regulatory frameworks are fragmented,

emphasizing that ICTs are essential for efficient and effective humanitarian operations, presenting opportunities to improve service delivery, strengthen human decision-making, capabilities, and relationships, and create new avenues for two-way communication, transparency, and accountability in the fulfilment of humanitarian mandates,

recognizing that National Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (National Societies) have already been implementing ICT solutions in some areas, such as emergency management, health services, Restoring Family Links, volunteer engagement, community engagement, and early warning systems, which fosters cooperation and forms a foundation to build upon, and that there is already a dynamic of collaboration and knowledge-sharing across the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement (Movement),

reaffirming that the creation, deployment, and use of ICTs by the Movement and its components must be guided by the Fundamental Principles, the Movement's humanitarian mission and commitment to do no harm, and by national, regional, and international legal frameworks, considering them all to be operational requirements to ensure that individuals' rights, safety, and dignity are respected,

affirming that humanitarian ICTs must be intentional and built on the needs, lived experience, contexts, and perspectives of people and communities, who may require accessible, low-technology, and non-digital alternatives, and that localization and knowledge transfer should be prioritized,

recognizing that trust is a core operational enabler, that humanitarian response is rooted in the expectation that the Movement is available and able to support people affected by armed conflict, disasters, and other emergencies, that this expectation extends to ICTs, including in situations where digital infrastructure might be disrupted, and that the misuse of ICTs may affect perceptions of impartiality, neutrality, and independence or undermine the trust in and access, acceptance, and safety of humanitarian actors,

acknowledging that the level of digital maturity varies across the Movement, within and across countries, contexts, and groups, including with regard to access, digital infrastructure, connectivity, cybersecurity, data management, domestic and international legal frameworks, resourcing, and funding, and that the Movement should take steps to ensure equitable access to ICTs, and *recognizing* the important role of support mechanisms available within the Movement in reducing disparities in the implementation of common ICT standards and approaches,

highlighting that the use of ICTs may have unintended impacts that could undermine the ability of the Movement to fulfil its humanitarian mission, that this is particularly true of emerging technologies, where the risks may be less predictable and therefore harder to expeditiously mitigate, and that such risks include the exacerbation of inequalities, loss or misuse of data, surveillance, and protection risks to both affected people and humanitarian staff and volunteers,

emphasizing that principled humanitarian organizations are committed, under core humanitarian accountability standards, to continuously research, monitor, and evaluate the outcomes and impact of their operations, including their use of current and future ICTs,

recalling the Movement's commitment to safeguarding the dignity and rights of individuals affected by armed conflicts, disasters, and other emergencies in its use of ICTs, as enshrined in previous resolutions, including (i) Resolution 1 of the 2019 Council of Delegates, "[Movement-wide commitments for community engagement and accountability](#)"; (ii) Resolution 12 of the 2022 Council of Delegates, "[Safeguarding humanitarian data](#)"; (iii) Resolution 4 of the 33rd International Conference of the Red Cross and Red Crescent (International Conference), "[Restoring Family Links while respecting privacy, including as it relates to personal data protection](#)"; and (iv) Resolution 2 of the 34th International Conference, "[Protecting civilians and other protected persons and objects against the potential human cost of ICT activities during armed conflict](#)",

recognizing that because ICTs may not be explicitly designed to sufficiently take into account and integrate humanitarian needs and vulnerabilities, there is a need to adapt current approaches to technology research, design, development, and adoption in order to embed principled and accountable use of ICTs in the process, and *highlighting*, in particular, the critical importance of responsible technology design, delivery, and use, data-sharing and privacy principles, collaboration on cyber risks, and the sustainability, accessibility, and affordability of data and digital solutions,

respecting that existing widely accepted frameworks and practices in technical areas, such as humanitarian accountability, cybersecurity, information management, software standards, data protection, and procurement, can guide principled and accountable use of ICTs, including with regard to data collection and processing and the downstream impacts of their use, noting, in particular, national, regional, and international legal frameworks and Movement practices reflecting the importance of data privacy and protection,

understanding that determining the appropriate technological solution involves complex choices, that the goals of simplifying the digital ecosystem, diversifying providers, and enhancing data governance, processing, and security can be in tension, and that building and maintaining appropriate interoperable ICT solutions within the Movement, including open source software, may afford greater transparency, adaptability and independence and strengthen accountability, allowing humanitarian principles to be reflected directly into the design and operation of digital services,

emphasizing the critical role of dialogue and of engagement with technology stakeholders, such as between Movement components and with technology providers, governments, social innovation companies, and research and academic institutions,

recognizing that a life-cycle management approach to ICTs may reduce the risk of harm to people and the planet, noting that ICT supply chains – from extraction and use to disposal – may contribute to environmental damage, climate change, and pollution and that this may contradict or undermine the Movement's work in other areas, aimed at addressing such harms, and *acknowledging* the Movement's commitments to reducing negative impacts and encouraging the use of ICTs that reflect a commitment to sustainability,

1. *calls on* Movement components to develop practical guidance on assessing and mitigating risks to affected communities and the humanitarian sector from intentional misuse and unintended adverse consequences of ICTs and from lawful and unlawful access to data by third parties, and *calls on* Movement components to use safe, inclusive, accessible, and sustainable ICT solutions to help alleviate the suffering of people, strengthen their autonomy and resilience, and complement face-to-face interactions;
2. *calls for* Movement components to take a principled, balanced, and responsible approach in the development, adoption, and deployment of ICTs that considers existing local solutions and laws, bespoke development, community capacity, resource constraints, situational urgency, open source approaches, collaborative potential, linguistic capacity, availability, interoperability, scalability, and sustainability;
3. *commits* Movement components – within the scope of their respective mandates, proportionate to institutional capacities, and considering operational needs and contexts – to utilizing those technology design and deployment practices that centre community needs and decision-making, to building feedback mechanisms and to consulting volunteers, affected people, users, and other stakeholders to help select solutions, whether analogue or digital, which enable safe, equitable, inclusive, and accessible delivery of assistance and services;
4. *calls for* Movement components, recognizing that the level of digital maturity and implementation of widely accepted frameworks and practices varies across National Societies, to invest in awareness-raising, guidance, training, peer support, resources, and capacity-building programmes for staff, volunteers, youth groups, and operating partners, through existing platforms and cooperation mechanisms available within the Movement;
5. *also calls for* Movement components to put in place appropriate and effective policies, procedures, and measures to encourage responsible practices, minimize risks, facilitate information-sharing among Movement components, prepare for and respond to critical incidents (such as data breaches) particularly where they impact operations involving multiple Movement components, and build accountability, transparency, and support for those impacted;
6. *encourages* Movement components to embed inclusive monitoring, evaluation, and community engagement and accountability practices throughout the ICT life-cycle, including the sharing of good practices and lessons learned, particularly when the application of ICTs fails to meet the objectives sought or results in risks or harm to affected people;
7. *proposes* that Movement components pursue a collective and collaborative approach to improving procurement of and investment in ICTs by developing and promoting guidance and sharing expertise on digital independence, data protection, environmental impacts, cybersecurity, sustainability, legal risks, and ethical practices, and that they leverage open source technologies by fostering collaboration at the operational level, soliciting voluntary contributions and promoting the development of interoperable platforms and infrastructure that can be reused and adapted across the Movement;
8. *encourages* Movement components to take a circular approach to ICT development, use, procurement, and disposal that minimizes its embedded climate and environmental impacts and risks, and *urges* the adoption of appropriate tools to manage said risks and impacts, to align with wider commitments;

9. *urges* Movement components to explore emerging ICTs, such as AI, in an intentional and responsible way by establishing internal policies, governance, and oversight mechanisms that are responsive, forward-looking, and adaptive as technology evolves, and that promote responsible, safe, coherent, transparent, and human-centred use in alignment with the Fundamental Principles, enforcing human oversight of and accountability for decisions impacting the life and dignity of affected people and humanitarian staff and volunteers;
10. *invites* Movement components to influence the practices, policies, and standards of technology stakeholders (including governments, universities, and the private sector) to take into account humanitarian concerns, protect people in situations of vulnerability, and highlight the specific risks and opportunities of the deployment of ICTs in armed conflicts, disasters, and other emergencies; to promote stakeholders' understanding of humanitarian responsibilities towards communities; and to encourage stakeholders to set requirements reflecting humanitarian principles, imperatives, and priorities;
11. *thinks* the Principled and Accountable Use of ICTs in Humanitarian Action Working Group for developing this resolution, and *requests* the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) and International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC), together with interested National Societies, to work towards the integration of the principled and accountable approach outlined in this resolution into the working culture and processes of the Movement by supporting the evolution of this working group, as a catalyst for knowledge exchange and technical cooperation, striving for balanced geographical representation and the participation of National Societies with varying levels of digital maturity, operational contexts, and institutional capacities, to:
 - a. map existing applicable frameworks, codes of conduct, and other rules, alongside existing collaboration and coordination mechanisms within the Movement, and establish an action plan to address identified gaps and challenges
 - b. ensure there is a Movement forum for generating discussion, guiding research, providing insights, and facilitating information-sharing, peer support, capacity-building, and cooperation among Movement components
 - c. report back on progress to the 2028 Council of Delegates.