



The important statutory meetings

of the Red Cross / Red Crescent Movement, the 30th International Conference (Conference) and the preceding internal Movement meeting of the Council of Delegates (CoD) are less than two months away. The preparations are well under way. We are expecting some 1500 delegates to the Conference and about 900 to the Council. Substance issues have been further developed since the convocation in May and in September the Standing Commission signed off the working documents for release to the members.

The 30th Conference – agenda and officers

All the working documents in four languages (Arabic, English, French and Spanish) should by now be with every member of the Conference; that is, the National Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (NS) and all States Parties to the Geneva conventions. These documents can also be downloaded from our website, www.rcstandcom.info as well as from those of the ICRC (www.icrc.org) and of the International Federation (www.ifrc.org). Some draft resolutions for the Conference, notably those on IHL and improved disaster response or IDRL, will be submitted at a later date, by the end of October.

On the CD mailed to you and on the Conference websites you will find the provisional agenda, background documents and reports related to the four Conference objectives, draft or pre-draft resolutions and follow-up reports to the 28th IC in 2003. NS have received a second CD with all the corresponding working documents for the CoD.

I want to draw your attention to the fact that the agenda for the Conference is to be adopted by the Council of Delegates meeting on 23-24 November, as stipulated in the Rules of Procedure for the RCRC Movement.

The Standing Commission slightly amended the provisional agenda of the Conference by including information on actions undertaken since the 29th Conference in 2006 under the agenda item on follow-up of previous Conferences. A similar amendment was introduced into the agenda for the Council.

The Council also approves a list of Conference officers, nominated by the Standing Commission, for submission to the Conference for final approval.

I'm pleased to announce that we have nominated Ms Mandisa Kalako-Williams, President of the South African Red Cross, as Chair of the Conference. We have also asked H.E. Ambassador Masood Khan of the Permanent Mission of Pakistan to Chair the drafting committee at the Conference.

Highlights in this issue:

- The CoD and 30th IC less than two months away
- The Council/Conference documents have reached you
- Consultations continue
- Nominations are arriving for the SC election

Website:
www.rcstandcom.info

Further distinguished representatives of NS and States have been invited to accept the positions of vice chairs and other important functions at the Conference. As I'm still awaiting the formal response from some persons approached, I cannot yet disclose the full list.

Let me again reiterate my thanks and appreciation to the Swiss Government for their continued support. In addition to substantial financial support, we particularly value working together with the Commissioner, Ambassador Stephan Husy to ensure a smooth and productive Conference.

I hope that the Council, and the Conference, as before, will lend their support to the nominations made and wish the officers every success in leading the Conference towards the set objectives.

Towards the expected outcomes

The four main objectives, as initially outlined in documents accompanying the convocation in May, are more broadly introduced in the working documents now submitted for the Conference.

Under the slogan 'Together for humanity' the goal is, as you will recall, identifying the major challenges that the Movement and States will face and must address in the coming years. To help focus on the core issues at hand, there are some key concepts to help keep our minds focused:

- humanitarian consequences,
- cooperation and partnership
- future-orientation

The Conference will analyse the humanitarian consequences of global developments in the four now well-known areas of environmental degradation including climate change, urban violence, international migration and emergent and recurrent diseases and other public health challenges as

a base for a future Movement agenda.

A high-profile panel will lead us on the opening day into the general debate on this 1st objective and will introduce each of the four areas and participate in a debate facilitated by Ms Lyse Doucet of the BBC. It is a real pleasure to welcome her and our distinguished panellists:

- Dr R.K. Pachauri, Chairman of the International Panel on Climate Change,
- Dr Ndioro Ndiaye, Deputy Director of the IOM,
- Dr Sima Samar, Chairperson of the Afghanistan Independent Human Rights Commission (AIHRC) and
- Professor Jeffrey Sachs, Special Advisor to the UN Secretary General.
- The 'voice of the Movement' in the panel is Mr Shaban Mawanda, Chairman of the Uganda RC Youth.

On the issues debated under this 1st objective, we hope to adopt a declaration outlining our commitments and resolve, as NS and States, arising from the panel and the general debate on future humanitarian challenges.

This general debate provides us within the Movement with the golden opportunity to clarify the advantages of our auxiliary role, which is the focus of objective 2 and the corresponding resolution. The proposed definition of the auxiliary role will help NS shape their role and partnership agendas with their governments within a global framework and in addressing the common challenges on national level.

Equally important are the guidelines for improved disaster response, or IDRL as we've come to know them, which will be dealt with under objective 4 leading to a resolution. The Guidelines as a non-binding guidance tool fit 'hand-in-glove' to the notion of auxiliary role and to our global network, which works with disaster response across all borders and boundaries.

The International Conference has a special history and role when it comes to International Humanitarian Law issues. This important concern is again

on our agenda, as its objective 3, aiming towards a resolution. The objective is to reaffirm the continuing applicability and relevance of existing humanitarian law and to urge respect for it. The ICRC has prepared an extensive and thorough report on the challenges in IHL as basis for discussion.

A full-day commission will debate the auxiliary role on Wednesday, November 28. IHL and the guidelines for disaster response will be discussed in half-day commissions on the same day.

As is the tradition, the aim is to adopt the declaration and the mentioned resolutions by consensus. The negotiations towards this aim will take place in the drafting committee, which is open to all.

As in the past, voluntary pledges linked to the objectives are welcome. National Societies, individually or together with other NS, governments and observers are invited to submit pledges. They are commitments to undertake specific actions within a defined timeframe. Guidelines for pledging have been sent with the convocation last May and are available on the website.

Ten informal workshops and a large number of side events are included in the programme. Further information on the workshops and workshop organisers can be found on the websites.

and the International Federation. The members are elected *ad personam*. Personal qualities and fair geographic distribution should be taken into account when voting, as stipulated in the Statutes of the Movement.

Of the current five elected members, Ms Janet Davidson of Canada, Mrs Zoy Katevas de Sclabos of Chile and Ambassador Philippe Cuvillier of France are not seeking re-election. Among the eight nominations submitted so far are those of two current members: Professor Freddy Karup Pedersen of Denmark and myself. All nomination forms with information on the candidates are available on www.rcstandcom.info

There you can also find the recommendations adopted by the Commission in September last year to guide the election process and Guiding Principles adopted in May this year.

The Statutes allow nominations as late as 48 hours before the election. It is, however, advisable to submit the nominations well ahead of that deadline to allow sufficient time for Governments and NS to acquaint themselves with and study the merits and aspirations of the candidates.

In the evening of the 27th of November, on the 2nd day of the Conference, there will be an informal opportunity for NS as well as Governments to meet with all the candidates.

SC Elections

The Conference will elect five (5) members to the Standing Commission for the next four-year term. NS as well as Governments have a vote.

The Standing Commission is the trustee of the International Conference between conferences. Its functions are outlined in the Statutes of the Movement. In addition to the five elected members, there are 4 *ex officio* members representing the ICRC

The Council

In the Council, preceding the Conference and following the Federation's General Assembly, all 186 National Societies, the ICRC and the International Federation are members. It will discuss and decide upon internal Movement matters as well as position the Movement on key issues before the Conference. It will also, as mentioned, adopt the agenda for the International Conference and approve the list of nominated officers for the same.

This year the Council is requested to

adopt a comprehensive Strategy on restoring Family Links prepared by the ICRC in close consultation with NS. Furthermore, it will consider progress made in implementing the Strategy for the Movement, updated at the previous Council in 2005. It will hear a report on the work of the Standing Commission, including action taken since the 29th Conference and follow-up reports on resolutions adopted in Seoul in 2005. Among them, the work on weapons and IHL with a draft resolution, progress made regarding revision of NS statutes and on action 4 of the Movement Strategy on Movement fora. Furthermore, there will be a report on work done to promote adherence to the Seville Agreement and its Supplementary Measures. Preparing for the Conference, the issues of the auxiliary role and migration are also on the agenda.

In three parallel commissions at the Council, NS can raise any issues relating to the Conference commencing after the Council. Key issues and how best to ensure that we achieve the set objectives will be discussed along with possible challenges – if any – that we may face during the Conference. In short, how the Conference will work.

It is quite important to be clear about the key issues from a Movement perspective to enable NS to have a visible and strong presence in the most important body of the Conference, the drafting committee.

In conclusion

“Together for humanity” carries a strong message: the challenges ahead of mankind cannot be addressed by States alone – or by us as a global Movement. They demand that we join forces, work in partnership for lasting results, to truly respond to the call and expectations of the most vulnerable in the world.

I hope NS are by now engaged in a preparatory dialogue with their governments to promote a good under-

standing of the issues on the agenda and of the envisaged results. National Societies can positively influence and help governments better understand why the RCRC Movement decided to set the agenda as it is, why we want to discuss these particular issues and what we expect as outcomes.

I warmly welcome you to the Council and the Conference and look forward to seeing you there,

Yours sincerely,



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Chairman
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