

The 30th International Conference

of the Red Cross and Red Crescent last November can only be described as a success. In the true spirit of 'Together for humanity' quite remarkable results were achieved. They included setting the strategic directions for how to tackle the humanitarian consequences of the most topical developments of our time, defining the role of the Red Cross/Red Crescent as auxiliary to public authorities and agreeing on the principles for disaster response. Further, the Conference found consensus on key issues of importance in its resolution on International Humanitarian Law.

National Societies played an important role in securing the excellent outcome; a role, which gained the respect and acknowledgement of governments, as voiced by their representatives in the Group of Ambassadors. It was apparent that National Societies made the difference with their presence; they gave the humanitarian values and objectives concrete dimension and meaning, thus underlining the different character of a Red Cross/Red Crescent Conference in comparison to fora that governments are more accustomed to.

When preparing for the Conference, the Standing Commission aimed for one of a different kind, with a future-oriented focus, and different also in terms of structure and content. We succeeded and in doing so brought the partnership between the components of the Movement and States to yet a new, advanced level of understanding and cooperation.

The Conference resolutions and the declaration provide a solid base for

our future work. Together with the outcomes of the preceding Council of Delegates, they form the basis for the work of the Standing Commission during its 4-year mandate and also for the individual components of the Movement.

The New Commission

The Conference also elected **the XV Standing Commission**. It now includes a representative from Africa – Mr Adama Diarra from Mali – correcting a situation that has prevailed since 1995. The other elected members are Dr Massimo Barra from Italy, vice chair of the Commission, Mr Steve Carr from the US, Mr Eamon Courtenay from Belize and the undersigned. Furthermore, the team includes President Jakob Kellenberger and Dr Philip Spoerri of the ICRC and President Juan Manuel Suarez del Toro and the Secretary General of the International Federation as ex officio members. There will be a change also among the ex officio members as

Highlights in this issue:

- The successful 30th Conference
- The Standing Commission 2007-2011: 4-year agenda
- What's ahead?
- Update: MoU

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Mr Markku Niskala retires at the end of June as Secretary General of the Federation and is succeeded by Mr Bekele Geleta.

The new Commission met in February and April. Right from the start, it set its eyes on the full mandate period of four years rather than the shorter time from Council to Council. The Commission – and I quote the Movement Statutes – “is to further and encourage the implementation of resolutions of the International Conference and to examine matters, which concern the Movement as a whole”. This, by definition, requires a longer term perspective than from one Council meeting to the next and is now reflected in the adopted SC Plan of Action for the current and coming year.

The 2-year Plan of Action is based on carrying out the tasks, as specified in the Statutes of the Movement and those stemming from various resolutions of the Council and of the International Conference. It further builds on work-in-progress, initiated during the previous Commission as well as on tasks and functions as called for by specific issues and processes such as the Strategy for the Movement.

What's ahead for the Commission?

Our core tasks include the preparations for the **2009 Council of Delegates**, to take place in Nairobi 23-25 November.

In April we established a working group tasked with advising us on substance when deciding on the Council agenda and programme. It is chaired by Adama Diarra, Commission member from Mali, with a representative of the Host Society, Kenya Red Cross, as vice chair.

Members include representatives of

the ICRC Assembly and senior management and of the International Federation Governing Board and senior management along with three Ad Persona individuals, including a youth representative.

I urge National Societies to share with us their thoughts on Movement-level issues that they would like to see discussed and dealt with by the Council. As 2009 is a year without an International Conference, we have the opportunity to look in depth at our own internal Movement challenges and how we would like to go forward. As before, the easiest way to reach us is by e-mail contact@rcstandcom.info

Another major focus area is the follow-up of the implementation of the outcomes of the 2007 statutory meetings. I look forward to regular progress and implementation reports on all the resolutions to enable the SC to take any action that might prove necessary in the interest of the Movement.

Special attention will be given to the **implementation of the MoU** between the Israeli MDA and the Palestine RCS. In the Commission, Dr Barra is in charge of following this file.

The Monitor, Mr Pär Stenbäck has recently submitted his report to the two National Societies concerned and to the ICRC and the Federation. The latter sent it to all other National Societies, who in turn are asked to share the findings with their respective governments.

As a general conclusion of the six months since the International Conference, the Monitor finds that although implementation has continued, only limited progress can be recorded. Even so, he praises the continued goodwill and cooperation between the President of the PRCS and the Chairman of the MDA and staff of both Societies.

The passage of ambulances stays a priority issue among those remaining and needing attention according to the Monitor. Transport arrangements for patients requiring ambulance services in and out of Gaza remains a concern and subject for discussion between the two Societies on how to best coordinate their efforts for adequate transport of patients.

On the geographical scope of the activities of the two Societies, a plan for resolving the issue of MDA presence in the occupied Palestine Territories had been agreed upon by the two parties and is progressing. On cooperation with other National Societies within and/or outside the region, the Monitor welcomes the strengthening of the international and regional role of the Societies and underlines the need for increased coordination on how third Societies could better contribute to the implementation process of the MoU.

When it comes to the Israeli and the Palestinian authorities, the Monitor continues to liaise with them but is concerned about the bureaucratic hurdles the implementation of the MoU continues to face.

He recommends in his report that monitoring is continued and that at least one interim report be issued still before the November 2009 Council of Delegates. The ICRC and the Federation endorse the recommendations of the Monitor and have set the date of 31st January 2009 for a next report.

The **Strategy for the Movement** has been, and continues to be, central to our work; in particular Action 4 which is about analysing the complexities of our Movement fora. The work, led by Steve Carr, will be guided by the report to and the relevant resolution of the 2007 Council and, for continuity, will build on initial work carried out under the leader-

ship of professor Freddy Pedersen in the previous Commission.

An analysis of existing meetings within the Movement re content, frequency and mandates as well as an evaluation of them in terms of outcomes regarding current strategies and priorities and cost effectiveness is planned. The desirability and feasibility of closer articulation of the Federation's General Assembly and the Council and of the decision making processes within the Movement will also be looked into taking into account the specific mandates of the various components.

To help encourage and re-energize the implementation of all 10 actions in the Movement Strategy, the Commission will work with focal points within the ICRC and the International Federation to cooperate and coordinate promotion and monitoring. Implementation has been of concern to us and we hope to see more action and better feedback on efforts by National Societies.

A small working group is foreseen in due course to assist and advice in the work. In addition to the ICRC and the Federation secretariat representatives, we hope to see the involvement of NS experienced personalities from amongst present and/or past governance members. Groundwork in exploring directions for a post-2011 Movement Strategy is expected to be done by the same group.

Other issues of importance that have surfaced in our exploratory discussions within the context of a 'future-agenda' as 'matters that concern the Movement as a whole' include the Declaration of the 30th Conference as a strategic framework, challenges still facing the Seville Agreement in an increasingly complex operational environment and the Movement Statutes.

There are no imminent pressures to revise either the Seville Agreement –

which is functioning quite well in the 'spirit of Seville' – or the Statutes of the Movement. However, a thorough analysis of any underlying needs that may be evolving, or are dormant, is foreseen to ensure a controlled course of action if and when deemed necessary.

The Commission as a whole is involved in these discussions with Eamon Courtenay in the lead. A Round Table of SC members and experienced invitees is planned for early September for in-depth initial discussions on such Movement-wide issues and to guide future work. Whatever needs for action that may surface out of such deliberations, the aim remains set for the statutory meetings in 2011.

As has been the tradition, the SC will continue to participate at **regional conferences and other meetings** and events with the purpose to consult and seek the views of National Societies on issues that it is working on and to be informed on relevant developments.

We are looking ahead at a busy 4-year period. I'm hopeful that the commitment and enthusiasm of all the members together with our healthy open and frank discussions will help us move on these important issues and further the interest of the Movement, which is our main and shared concern.

Finances...

Although our budgetary needs are modest in the totality of RCRC action, we cannot function without your support. The Council in 2007 adopted a new sharing key for covering the costs of the Commission. It calls on the ICRC, the International Federation and National Societies to jointly contribute on the basis of 1/3 each to our

budget, which in turn is based on a 2-year Plan of Action.

A request for your voluntary contribution has recently found its way to all National Societies. I thank you for your generous support in the past and look forward to its continuation also in the future.

In conclusion

"Together for humanity" carried us successfully through the International Conference and provided us with important tools and a strong message for the future: the challenges ahead of mankind cannot be addressed by States alone – or by us as a global Movement. We must join forces and work in partnership for lasting results, to truly respond to the call and expectations of the most vulnerable in the world.

I would like to take this message also as an inspiration for us to work even better and closer together, in unity and good coordination within the Movement. A strong and well-functioning Red Cross and Red Crescent is a prerequisite for successful cooperation with other partners, including States. And strength we need to manage the challenges ahead!

I look forward to seeing you and hearing your thoughts at upcoming meetings and events. In the meantime, my best wishes for success in all your endeavours.

Yours sincerely,



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Chairman
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