

**Federation Board  
October 11, 2004**

**H.E. Dr Mohammed Al-Hadid**

**Chairman**

**Standing Commission**

Mr President of the International Federation,  
Mr President of the ICRC,  
Mr Secretary General,  
Dear friends, members of the Board,

It is always a great pleasure to be amongst members of the Red Cross/Red Crescent family. I am honoured to be with you and take this opportunity to inform you about the progress of work in the SC.

On Friday we had our fourth meeting in this very same room. It took place in an open and constructive atmosphere where we debated matters and took decisions on some of the most important Movement issues we are faced with. I'd like to thank my SC colleagues from the ICRC and from the International Federation for their support to the work of the Commission.

In the SC, we have 30 NS involved in our four working groups advising us on key Movement issues. We have in these groups active, knowledgeable and prominent NS personalities – of all ages. The gender issue has been well noted.

I know that you are all eager to know how far we have reached on the emblem issue. I want to assure you that the SC members are all committed to the resolutions taken by you at the Council of Delegates and at the International Conference last December. Through our working group we are continuing dialogue with both NS and government representatives so that we are ready to act when a window of opportunity opens and circumstances allow. You all understand that currently this depends on a change towards a more favourable political environment.

I always say that our worst enemy is ignorance. To overcome this, we try to keep all parties concerned informed about the key issues at stake in the draft third additional protocol to enable us to achieve universality and to enhance protection. I count on you sharing information you receive with others, especially with your governments, as this will facilitate our endeavours.

You have all recently received a questionnaire about how you are implementing the strategy for the Movement. The SC and the working group in charge urge all of you to respond to this questionnaire, before the set deadline. This will help us build on your feedback and come up with an update of the Strategy that represents experiences, expectations and inputs from all regions on how we can improve our cooperation within the Movement.

On another note, the Seville Agreement working group has collected extensive data and information from all components working in the field. Work on the Agreement will be a very good test for how well we can resolve some of our purely internal differences for better performance and impact and for building a Movement identity rather than institutional identities. It has become quite clear to me that there is far too much room for interpretations in its implementation. We need much stricter and more disciplined cooperation modes and clearer roles for the NSs, especially for the Host NS, the Lead Agency when there is one and PNSs, in conflicts and emergencies as well as in long term development or capacity building.

Iraq is such an example. There the Federation took a backseat right from the start making it more difficult now for NS to participate. Why? Yes, Iraq is exceptionally difficult for everyone. But who says other 'iraqs' aren't looming just round the corner in this increasingly complex and challenging world?

These are important processes in the build-up towards the next Council in Seoul in November 2005 and the IC in Geneva in 2007. They all contribute towards ensuring that our entire Movement, all its components, remain relevant and that it meets the expectations of the vulnerable people we are to serve and of our supporters.

The Council, which follows your General Assembly, is the highest Movement forum bringing together all components – the Federation, the ICRC and the 181 NS. It is the place to discuss issues that concern us all. On behalf of the SC, I want to thank the Republic of Korea Red Cross Society, which will be hosting our statutory meetings there. I'm sure a lot of efforts are put to make these events a success.

The SC adopted on Friday a draft provisional agenda for the Council in Seoul. It will be shared with all NS shortly. I ask you to respond with your remarks and observations on how we can better organise the up-coming Council and how we can improve discussions on relevant topics.

I also thank the Algerian Red Crescent for hosting the 6th Pan African Conference. I was very much impressed by the frank and open dialogue that took place in Algiers. The African NS addressed issues that are a priority to them. Discussions focused on what they really needed and on what they expect from us. We have to listen to their voices to find the right balance and the proper forum for continued deliberations and constructive dialogue. Listening to everybody, we move forward and promote harmony and understanding amongst ourselves.

I also attended the recent Donor Forum. The preparations and the hospitality by the Japanese Red Cross were next to none! The members of that forum heard and carefully took note of the messages from Algiers. They also appreciate strengthening less fortunate sister National Societies while also advocating not only for a strong secretariat but for a strong Federation. The overwhelming majority of NS do need a strong Federation. So does the world. Even the ICRC would be considerably weakened if NS and/or their Federation are weakened. The Movement, the victims and beneficiaries need a strong Federation.

A strong Federation means that all members are equal, that we together strike a fair and right balance between funding needs and funding capacities based on solidarity and on commonly agreed roles and responsibilities. It also means that we can deliver better services and save more lives. The richness still thrives in our diversity, in our local and regional capacities to serve the vulnerable populations.

I appeal, to all Movement components to get our act together as a Movement in order for us to remain a relevant major humanitarian global organisation and a key player with a distinctive role that will help alleviate suffering of mankind and protect its dignity. I quote Martin Luther King: "We should all take pride in everything we do – whether we are working on master pieces or keeping the streets clean". We have to believe in the work we are doing to be committed to the mission and the common cause.

I would like to take this opportunity to express my gratitude to all NS for your invaluable support for the SC and wish you a successful Board meeting and may your

God be with you!