

**Address at the Governing Board of the
International Federation of RCRC Societies
Geneva 16 June 2006**

H.E. Dr Mohammed Al-Hadid

**Chairman
Standing Commission**

Mr President of the International Federation,
Mr President of the ICRC,
Mr Secretary General,
Members of the Board,
Dear friends and colleagues,

I want to thank the Federation and you, Mr President for giving me the opportunity to address you at this crucial point in time. As members of this Board, you have the responsibility to create a constructive atmosphere so essential for the discussions, debates and consultations that at the end of the coming historical statutory meetings should hopefully produce the set objectives and results that the Movement seeks to achieve.

We will meet again on Monday at the Council of Delegates after your General Assembly to fine tune the final preparations and to position ourselves clearly as a Movement ready to meet our Government partners at the 29th International Conference on Tuesday morning.

We in the Standing Commission have clearly defined the expected results of next week's meetings –namely:

- to amend the Statutes of our Movement to bring them in synchrony with the tools of International Humanitarian Law, the third additional Protocol to the Geneva Conventions, adopted last December by the diplomatic conference in Geneva;
- To formalise the name for the additional emblem – the 'red crystal ' as you already know it and

- To create the framework for the Palestine Red Crescent to join the Movement as a full member.

I would add another equally important objective: to come out of these meetings as a Movement firmly united around the principles and our basic mission.

I hope we can emerge stronger than before having finally fulfilled our principle of universality as well as having enforced the protection so necessary for our humanitarian workers giving them access to victims especially in wars and conflicts.

I want once more - and perhaps this will be the last time - to emphasize that the 29th Conference will not deal with the emblem issue. That issue was closed with the adoption of the third additional Protocol in the early morning of December 8 last year. As a Movement, we have welcomed the adoption, yet have expressed our disappointment that a humanitarian instrument had to be adopted by vote.

We need again to focus on building consensus around the objectives of and the items on the Conference agenda. The Movement needs consensus as a way of working at its most important fora, the International Conference. The reason is obvious: to ensure that we will be heard and acknowledged also in the future as a Movement when seeking solutions to important humanitarian concerns in partnership with governments. I don't need to remind you that we have immediately after this Conference to start preparing for the 30th Conference, which will take place in November 2007.

The diplomatic conference in December was for the States. The June Conference is a Movement Conference, where the aim is now – as it has been in the past – to discuss and resolve issues in the spirit of humanity, respecting and adhering to the Fundamental Principles. This is even more important now after the Protocol was adopted by vote.

Between now and June the 20th I will do my utmost together with the ICRC and all of you - to iron out and pave the way for a harmonious, smoothly running and successful Conference. For that we certainly need and count on the constructive participation of all National Societies as we have always been able to do.

I would like to encourage you as Board members to ensure that any unclear issues and questions that may still occupy the minds of the delegations from National Societies are clarified during the coming days, before Tuesday morning. All delegations, National Societies as well as Governments, should understand fully what lies behind the objectives of the Conference and why we need to achieve them.

In the Council, together with our colleagues from the ICRC, we have a golden opportunity to discuss the objectives and the best way to reach them, to really and truly consolidate our position as a Movement. I hope consensus, will remain to be the working methodology in our Movement even under these circumstances tackling somewhat a difficult issue.

I'm an optimist by nature and I do believe that in the end our humanitarian values and interests will prevail and take precedence over political games. Having said that, I certainly also acknowledge the fact that there are and will always be many relevant and justified concerns that will occupy the minds of people both at the Conference and on the ground, brought about by ongoing conflicts and tensions, especially now in the Middle East. Ensuring that the Move-

ment stays united will improve our resolve and our promise to address humanitarian concerns on the ground and to influence other fora, which are better placed to deal with and to seek political solutions necessary in today's many and differing conflicts.

Your agenda also includes many other important issues. Let me briefly just comment on one of them: Your focus on Africa and how best to implement the Global Agenda there is both timely and relevant. As I understand it, it will amongst other angles touch upon cooperation and complementary roles and functions of National Societies working with governments and other organisations. The setting is achieving the global Millennium Development Goals. Your discussions on that will be very important also thinking of the 2007 International Conference, where the auxiliary role of National Societies is likely to be one of the major themes.

May I conclude by wishing you success in your deliberations and that your discussions are forward looking and constructive when addressing the work and actions needed to ensure help and support to vulnerable people - at home and around the globe. This, after all, remains our main task - our Mission. As responsible and active leaders of Red Cross/Red Crescent we will be judged by how well we respond to the challenges of today and the humanitarian needs so evident everywhere. That is our ultimate challenge when it comes to the Power of Humanity.

May I remind you of what Benjamin Franklin once said, and I quote: "We should all hang together; otherwise and most assuredly, we will hang separately." I look forward to working with you at the Council and at the Conference in a positive and reassuring spirit as always in the interest of achieving our humanitarian objectives.

Thank you.

