

**Address at the Governing Board of the  
International Federation of RCRC Societies  
Geneva 3 October 2007**

**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 floor again to address and update this distinguished Board on the work of the Standing Commission. I'm sorry I could not be with you at your meeting in May. My daughter was getting married and I had to give away the bride.

Almost a year has passed since we last met, a few months after the 29th International Conference. Time really does fly. Now we are on the threshold of the 30th Conference. Quite a different atmosphere and expectations prevailed when we prepared for the 29th Conference. This November I expect a lively forward looking Conference, where we aim to formulate our Movement's agenda for the coming 10-15 years. In order to retain our position as the leading humanitarian force protecting and assisting to the vulnerable populations of the world, we must to act as one, in unity, at the Conference to shape our future agenda.

The Standing Commission has focused most of its work on preparation for the upcoming Council of Delegates and the 30th International Conference. The Council will be rather short – 1,5 days – and will focus on preparing and positioning the Movement on crucial issues for the Conference. Nevertheless, the Council also has some important internal family business to attend to.

It has been asked to adopt a 10-year Strategy on Restoring Family Links, prepared by the ICRC

in close cooperation with National Societies.

We have the Movement Strategy to consider. We need to analyse how well we are implementing it and to hear an 'interim progress report' on work done by the Commission on the Strategy's Action 4, which looks at our many Movement fora, how to reduce unnecessary complexities and still improve effectiveness and efficiency.

In its report, the Joint Statutes Commission will draw your attention to the commitment made in 2001 to review the statutes of all National Societies and ensure they are in line with adopted guidelines. We will also hear how the Supplementary Measures to the Seville Agreement are impacting cooperation in international emergency operations.

I would like to draw your attention to two important findings regarding the Movement Strategy, which I feel are somewhat worrying:

In spite of clear improvements in coordination between the components, such as re-energized implementation of the Seville Agreement and its Supplementary Measures, the issue of cooperation in capacity building requires more attention. A Movement approach, called for since 2001, would ensure that we have a Movement-wide concept for capacity building to which all components would comply with. This issue requires attention and it needs to be done under your, that is, the Federation's leadership.

Furthermore, there appears to be a perception that the Movement Strategy is primarily a framework for the ICRC and the Federation. We need to do more to increase National Societies' ownership of the Strategy. Of the 62 Societies who responded to the self assessment carried out by the Federation secretariat, 37 or more than half rate their understanding of the Strategy as average only, only 15 saw it as strong and 10 as poor. NS are the vital force of the Movement and they must play a decisive role in promoting and actively furthering better cooperation between all components.

I hope that the Movement Strategy becomes their primary tool when it comes to improving cooperation.

Mr Chairman,

The commissions at this Council will differ from those we have had before: we will spend time preparing ourselves for the Conference, exploring key issues and how best to ensure that we achieve the set objectives. We must also reflect on what challenges – if any – we will face? How will the Conference work? How can we have strong National Society input in the most important body of the Conference – the drafting committee? And we must consider what other issues National Societies may want to discuss and clarify.

Before going into specific Conference issues, let me Mr Chairman express my appreciation and thanks to the National Society personalities that have helped the Standing Commission prepare for this Conference. Their input, together with that of colleagues from the ICRC and the Federation secretariat, has been important, innovative and boldly forward looking.

This promises to be a different kind of Conference to those that have gone before. It will seek to identify the major challenges that the Movement, together with States, must face and address in the coming years. The key terms to consider during our preparations are: humanitar-

ian consequences, cooperation and partnership and future-oriented.

We will analyse future humanitarian challenges in the light of major global developments in the four now well-known areas of environmental hazards, including climate change, violence, international migration and health threats.

This provides us with a golden opportunity to clarify the advantages of our auxiliary role. That in turn will help us shape our national role and partnership agendas with our respective governments within this global framework in the spirit of 'Together for humanity', the motto of the Conference. Related and equally important are the guidelines for improved disaster response or IDRL as we've come to know them. They fit 'hand-in-glove' to the notion of auxiliarity and to our role as a global network working across all borders and boundaries. I personally take great satisfaction in seeing the impressive progress in this work since I chaired the first meetings on it in its humble beginnings.

The International Conference has a very special history and role in promoting International Humanitarian Law. One of the important objectives of the November Conference is to reaffirm the continuing relevance of existing humanitarian law and to urge respect for it. The ICRC has prepared an extensive and thorough report on the challenges facing IHL. These challenges will be discussed, in what promises to be a very serious and intensive debate in one of the Commissions.

Mr Chairman,

We have also noted some clouds on the horizon; so far they fortunately don't seem to be turning into major storms.

The Standing Commission has been actively following the implementation of the MoU between the MDA in Israel and the PRCS in Palestine. However, some concerns have reached the Commission regarding the progress achieved. These concerns may also be voiced at the Council and at the Conference. I'm sure you will join me in encouraging growing cooperation between these two new members, not least because of the enormous humanitarian needs they face in their immediate environment. It is very important that they both fulfil the commitments they gave, which won them the support of the international community and allowed them to formally join our Movement.

Friends,

Allow me further to mention a few important matters regarding our coming statutory meetings:

I want to reiterate my strong support for the participation and involvement of youth - not only as the future but very much as a present force within the Movement. Your "1/3 initiative", by which one RC/RC youth representative should be included in every NS delegation of three, is indeed an important one and I hope it will be followed. The Standing Commission showed the way by inviting a youth representative to be the Movement's voice on the opening day of the Conference, in the high-profile introductory panel of experts on future humanitarian challenges.

As you know, the Conference elects five members to the Standing Commission. So far, we have seven nominations, which you can see on our website. I'm not going to go into this issue

any further apart from reminding you that in the election, personal qualities and fair geographic distribution should be taken into account, as stipulated in the Statutes of the Movement.

Let me now congratulate Mandisa Kalako-Williams, your fellow Board Member, on her nomination as Chairman of the 30th Conference. The Standing Commission also nominated Ambassador Masood Khan of Pakistan as Chair of the drafting committee. It is for the Council to decide on the list of officers to be proposed to the Conference but I trust that it will lend its support to these two key nominations along with a number of others and wish them every success in leading the Conference to achieve the set objectives.

Mr Chairman,  
Friends,

At the Inter-American Conference in Guayaquil in June, I launched an initiative on how we as a Movement can address the consequences of the environmental changes around us and which would help us to “walk our talk” at a Conference, which will address, amongst other major challenges, consequences of climate change. We must be conscious of the impact that our meetings and gatherings have on the environment. We should make an effort to organise ‘green conferences’ to minimize our carbon footprint.

I called on the Movement to set an example by seriously considering compensating for the greenhouse gases we help to create and the footprints we leave on the environment. We could design our own programmes to do this, or contribute as partners to other organisations’ existing programmes – which would be an appropriate way of highlighting that we are open to partnerships. I asked both the Federation and the ICRC to appoint focal persons to help us develop this initiative. I’m very pleased that fresh ideas have been developed within the Federation secretariat and hope we can continue work on them together so that, at the Conference in November, we can show we are serious about addressing environmental impact.

I will leave you with UN Secretary General Ban Ki Moon’s concluding remark after the high level UN meeting on climate change last week, – and I quote: “I sensed something remarkable happening, something transformative – a sea-change, whereby leaders showed themselves willing to put aside blame for the past and to pose to themselves more forward-looking questions” (unquote).

I hope these words will also prove fitting at our Conference and I’m sure we will see the same resolve among our leaders.

Outside this room there are many who believe passionately in our Movement. At the Conference we cannot afford to fail in our duty to serve the most vulnerable victims of these profoundly serious issues that are at hand.

I thank you.