

**Address at the Governing Board of the
International Federation of RCRC Societies
Geneva 25 October 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 once again giving me the opportunity to address and update this distinguished Board on the work of the Standing Commission since we last met on the eve of the 29th International Conference. That achieved a successful outcome and we now have a new emblem and two new member National Societies amongst us. It is very satisfying to have both Magen David Adom and the Palestine Red Crescent with us, not only because of reasons of principle but first and foremost to work with them in providing humanitarian services in a region yet again facing so many humanitarian needs.

Allow me for a short moment to revert to what I said in June when talking of the aims and objectives for the June Conference – and I quote:

“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.” Unquote.

The Movement managed to do just that. We did indeed emerge stronger; we stood our ground at a conference, which was probably the most political one we have experienced. Initially sus-

picion was cast as to whether the outcome of this Conference would divide the Movement. In fact it achieved the opposite – we came out stronger and more united than ever – reflecting the intensity of our humanitarian beliefs and aspirations for the future.

Further evidence of our strength is that two new member Societies were admitted unanimously I'm sure you join me in encouraging cooperation between the two new members in response to the enormous humanitarian needs in their immediate environment. It is very important that they fulfil the commitments they gave in their Memorandum of Understanding, which won them the support of the international community to simultaneously and formally join our Movement.

Their cooperation and performance is doubly important now when concerns brought about by the recent developments in the conflict surrounding them still occupy the minds of both governments and National Societies and of the people on the ground affected by the crisis.

Mr Chairman,

Let me now go to the recent Commission meeting: I'm very pleased to inform you that it decided to include Arabic as working language at all statutory Movement meetings. From now on, the Council of Delegates and the International Conference will also have interpretation and all documents in Arabic – as has the Federation at its General Assemblies. I hope this will further facilitate all forms of communication with our friends in the Arabic speaking world and closer interaction with everyone.

The Commission also heard a progress report from the Resolution 8 Group on the implementation of the Seville Agreement and – in particular – of the Supplementary Measures. Given the increasingly complex operations today and the multiple players involved, it is really important that we perform well as a Movement and live up to expectations when responding to the needs of the people and communities we serve. We are first and foremost accountable to the beneficiaries; we should gear our machinery accordingly. To duplicate, to compete internally and to act in an uncoordinated fashion serves only conflicting interests. At the same time I find it really gratifying to hear of the efficient and principled performance of the National Societies in some of the main crisis stricken countries. To me this is clear evidence that strengthening National Societies and their capacity gives us the best return on investment.

I know that you are very busy with your global agenda – and rightly so! – but I still hope you will also focus on the updated Movement Strategy. The fact that there is a Federation Board group tasked with promoting the Strategy is much appreciated and I look forward with great interest to getting feedback on how National Societies work with the Strategy.

The Commission is leading work on one of the 10 actions, on action 4 on “Enhancing dialogue and consultations within the Movement through better use of existing fora, and improved coordination of the agendas of statutory and other meetings”.

The implementation points expect that the Federation “consults with the ICRC and the Standing Commission in preparation of its regional conferences and sub-regional meetings” and that “organising committees for regional conferences ensure that Movement matters and decisions taken at the Council of Delegates and the International Conference are included on their agendas.”

Last but not least – action 4 calls for a “review of the entire construct of Movement fora and recommendations on reducing unnecessary complexities and improving effectiveness”.

Together with the ICRC and the Federation, Freddy Pedersen has been leading work on this challenging task, especially its last part, addressing the complexities inherent in our decision making processes. At the coming regional conferences in Singapore, Turkey and Ecuador we hope to collect views and ideas from National Societies on this matter, and will prepare a report to the Council next year although more detailed assessment will take more time.

This leads me to the 30th International Conference next year: in September the Standing Commission’s working group on themes and issues for the statutory meetings in 2007 met. We have a very good cross section of National Society personalities in the group and the outcomes from their deliberations will provide us with a very good basis for further planning.

Broad agreement emerged that a major theme at the 30th Conference has to centre on the **relationship between NS and government**. Whatever we choose to call it – auxiliary role, partnership, relationship – the need to clarify and define this relation is seen as crucial, a view endorsed by the Standing Commission. And there was an equally broad understanding in the group and Commission that **IHL challenges - issues, concerns and specific questions** should also be addressed by the IC as another main theme or ‘block’.

For both suggested main themes, detailed dimensions, angles and sub themes still need to be defined. In doing so, I hope we can be very specific regarding what exactly we need and want from states to fulfil our role and mandate.

The auxiliary role -focus should be on “what we are, what we mean, the way we operate” and in which specific contexts. We need to analyse ways and means of organising this relationship, taking note of existing best practices.

One of the humanitarian challenges identified was that of migrants. Another is the fact that there is continued grave violation of IHL – such as occurred during the recent conflict between Lebanon and Israel. We still have concerns about the desperate need for medical services in the occupied Golan territories – and a diagnostic unit for the inhabitants of this area still remains a priority. As you will remember this situation was addressed at both the Diplomatic Conference in December 2005 and again most recently in June this year but unfortunately has yet to be resolved. Other IHL issues requiring attention by the Conference are to be determined after careful analysis of developments since 2003. These may include for example challenges regarding detention in current armed conflicts, secret places of detention and HIV/AIDS in prisons in addition to improved respect for IHL and IDRL-issues.

The working group voiced a strong concern regarding the participation, involvement and influence of youth - not only as the future but very much as a present force of the Movement. It expressly supports the “1/3 initiative” launched at the Federation’s General Assembly in 2003 by which one RC/RC youth representative should be included in every NS delegation of three people.

I wholeheartedly back this initiative.

I understand that the 2007 meetings are on your agenda and look forward to feedback from you on the proposed themes. I would also encourage you to contact the members in the SC

working group who are seeking an exchange of ideas with National Societies in their regions to bring back to the planning table.

Friends,

We closed a long chapter in June and are moving towards a 'normal' International Conference and our internal Movement meetings in November next year. Now is the time to set our eyes and aims on important Movement matters for which we need the cooperation of states and where we can make use of our tremendous potential as a strong and unified Movement. But let's not go with a shopping list to the Conference! That would only dilute our agenda. We must be clear and specific on what we need – we have to set the expected outcomes.

It is important to know where we are heading – to set our goals - and to have a vision of how we can best serve the most vulnerable. Outside this room there is a multitude of believers in our Movement and more so inside this room. This should not be taken lightly as we cannot afford to fail in our duty to the victims.

Until we meet again I wish you success in undertaking your humanitarian responsibilities.

I thank you.