

Standing Commission Report to the CoD June 2006

Ambassador Philippe Cuvillier

Special Representative of the Standing Commission on the Emblem

Mr Chairman,
Respected Representatives of National Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies,
Dear Red Cross/Red Crescent friends,

After your General Assembly in the morning, we are now convened as the Council of Delegates, with our friends and colleagues from the ICRC and with the Standing Commission to make our final preparations and to position ourselves clearly as a Movement to be ready to meet our Government partners at the 29th International Conference tomorrow morning.

As members of this Council, the highest internal deliberative body of the Movement, we have the privilege and the responsibility to ensure a constructive atmosphere so essential for the debates and consultations at the coming historical Conference, which I'm confident, will produce the objectives and expected results that have been set for it.

This 29th International Conference has been convened to finalise the last steps in a long process, known as the 'emblem process'. But let me immediately underline that we are not here to discuss the emblem. That debate was closed in December 2005 with the adoption of the third Additional Protocol to the Geneva Conventions of 1949. The additional emblem is now adopted. One ratification has already reached the depositary; the next one is expected in a few days. The protocol will thus come into force as an international treaty after six months. Another vital reason that we are ready and can use the emblem when assistance is required.

Since 1997, a number of resolutions have been adopted by this Council of Delegates, the most recent one in November 2005, as well as by the 27th and the 28th International Conferences in 1999 and in 2003. All of them by consensus; the Movement was united in its efforts to find a "comprehensive and lasting solution to the question of the emblem".

For those of us who have not been involved since the early days of the process, it is good to note that the draft Protocol was first circulated in October 2000. We referred to it since as an «acceptable working basis» for a solution when circumstances permitted. But political circumstances and developments continued to stall progress until we finally had the breakthrough last December.

Regrettably, the Protocol was adopted by vote. This fact provides us with a particular challenge to take the final steps in closing this long process by way of consensus, as befits a Movement inspired by the principle of Unity. The Movement needs consensus as a way of working at this most important of all its fora, at 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 to take place in November next year.

It is important for another, perhaps even more crucial reason: to ensure that the Movement stays united. We should not leave any wounds or scars behind – they might take long to heal and even get infected in the process.

You are well aware of the expected outcomes for this conference as set by the Standing Commission:

- To adopt the amendments to the Statutes of the Movement consequent upon the adoption of the Protocol to integrate the Additional Distinctive Emblem;
- To agree upon the name “red crystal” for the additional emblem, and
- To create a framework for the recognition and admission of the Palestine Red Crescent Society.

Stemming from the debates at the diplomatic conference, although not in any way conditional to achieving the expected outcomes, the humanitarian services based on the Fundamental Principles for the benefit of the victims in the ongoing conflict in Palestine and Israel have become an important element in the preparatory negotiations and consultations.

In the interest of increased and improved operational cooperation, the Magen David Adom in Israel and the Palestine Red Crescent Society concluded their Memorandum of Understanding and the Agreement on Operational Arrangements on the eve of the diplomatic conference. These agreements greatly contributed to the adoption of the draft Protocol.

The MoU between two future National Societies in a situation of conflict and occupation can well be described as historical. This would not have been possible had it not been for a spirit of goodwill and a deep understanding of the humanitarian principles of our Movement expressed by these candidate Societies and their leadership.

The agreement is not between governmental authorities, but between two Societies. It seems evident that they have by and large delivered what they had agreed to deliver. It seems equally evident that certain elements could not be implemented without the endorsement and support of their respective authorities. If the results appear incomplete, the responsibility rests on the authorities, not on the Societies. At the Conference tomorrow we will have the latest update by the Swiss Government on the implementation why I will not forego their findings with any guesswork.

MDA and the PRCS have both applied to become members of the Movement. It would be most unfair to prevent or to delay their admission because of an unfavourable environment for

which they cannot be blamed. On the contrary, their rapid incorporation into the Movement can only give them more influence to defend the cause of peace and the right of victims to have access to assistance.

Mr Chairman, dear friends,

At the diplomatic conference in December the needs for medical services among the population in occupied Golan was a concern raised by a number of delegations. ICRC explained its regular activities in the area and declared its preparedness to develop a medical facility based on a needs assessment with and among the local population. ICRC has lived up to its commitment and practical work on the ground is in progress as we speak. ICRC will of course present its progress report on this specific issue also at the Conference.

The Council in Seoul in November 2005 requested in its Resolution 5 “the Standing Commission, the ICRC and the Federation, as a matter of urgency, to undertake the measures needed to give effect to the third Protocol after its adoption, especially with a view to ensuring the achievement as soon as possible of the Movement’s principle of universality”.

This emphasis has fuelled the preparations of the Conference. One of the objectives set by the Standing Commission is a framework for inclusion of the Palestine Red Crescent into the Movement. The adoption of the Protocol made it possible for the Magen David Adom to lodge its application for recognition and admission once the Statutes of the Movement would incorporate the additional, new emblem.

The entry of both National Societies would allow the completion of the Movement’s Fundamental Principle of Universality. This would also meet with the will expressed by both the MDA and the PRCS in their mutual agreement and by the 144 States Parties at the diplomatic conference as stated in the Final Act of that conference.

We are a Movement united in addressing humanitarian issues, which together with our fundamental principles are the sole base for our action.

Consensus does not imply that we are living in a perfect world and that everything we have wanted to achieve has been fully accomplished. We have to acknowledge the fact that there are a large number of relevant and justified humanitarian concerns that will occupy the minds of people both here and on the ground, brought about by ongoing conflicts and tensions. Ensuring that the Movement stays united will improve our resolve and capacity to address humanitarian concerns and to credibly forward other concerns to fora, which are better placed to deal with and seek political solutions necessary in today’s many and differing conflicts.

Thank you.