



The XV Standing Commission: 1 year into its mandate

The XV Standing Commission (SC) was elected by the 30th International Conference in November 2007. Its five 'ad personam' members although with a solid National Society background come from Belize, Italy, Jordan, Mali and from the United States.

The four ex officio members represent the ICRC and the International Federation, the 'newcomer' being the Secretary General of the latter, Mr Bekele Geleta, who took office in July this year.

This XV Commission has so far met in February, April and October for its full sessions. In September it hosted a 'Standing Commission+ Round Table', which is reported on later in the text.

From the start, the Commission planned for the full mandate period of four years, until the 31st Conference in 2011. The Movement Statutes expects it "to further and encourage the implementation of resolutions of the International Conference and to examine matters, which concern the Movement as a whole" in addition to the tasks of determining the agenda and preparing for the Council of Delegates' meetings every 2nd year and for the International Conference eve-

ry four years. In its two-year Plan of Action, which it adopted in April, the Commission outlines the main work it will undertake, some of which requires a longer term perspective than from one Council meeting to the next. The Plan of Action can be viewed on our website www.rcstandcom.info

The work is firmly anchored in the Statutes of the Movement and in various resolutions of the Council and of the International Conference.

Follow-up of CoD, IC

A core task of the Commission is 'to further and encourage' implementation of the outcomes of the 2007 statutory meetings, the Council of Delegates (CoD) and the international Conference (IC).

With no structure or mechanism of its

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own to enable follow-up, the Commission relies on the ICRC and the International Federation and their field structures to monitor and follow-up. Their representatives in the SC report on work done and progress made or constraints encountered. It is then up to the Commission, as a whole, to take any action that might prove necessary with the interest of the Movement in mind.

Special attention has been afforded to the implementation of the MoU between the Israeli MDA and the Palestine RCS, addressed in resolutions by both the Council and the Conference in November 2007. Its implementation is high priority for the Commission, which looks to the leadership of all components to assist and support this important process.

The involvement of the Monitor, Mr Pär Stenbäck has continued with a view to report to the Council of Delegates in Nairobi in November 2009.

Our assumption, based on information available to us and one year since the last Conference, is one of concern. Although implementation has continued, only limited progress has been recorded. There is goodwill and good cooperation between the PRCS and the MDA and staff of both Societies. But more needs to happen on the side of authorities to remove various bureaucratic hurdles to enable full implementation of the agreed elements in the MoU and the Agreement on Operational Arrangements.

We will have a next report from the Monitor at the end of January 2009.

One of the main issues at the last Conference was National Societies as auxiliaries to the public authorities in the humanitarian field. According to the Federation, the concept is progressing. Governments are the most important partners to National Societies, indeed to the Movement as a

whole. The Federation is producing a 'toolbox' of mechanisms in advocacy and communications, to highlight the advantages of a well-defined auxiliary role and record best practices in a balanced relationship. Independent National Societies, adhering to the Movement's Fundamental Principles and is an asset to any partner in their sphere of work.

The Commission has followed with great satisfaction the successful outcome of the ICRC coordinated Movement's efforts leading to the Convention on Cluster Munitions, which recently has been widely endorsement through states' signatures and some early ratifications. It is an important achievement in International Humanitarian Law, where the ICRC has its special mandate and which was extensively covered in the IHL resolution adopted by the Conference.

Progress can also be reported on the implementation of the IDRL Guidelines through National Societies' approaches to their governments. The Federation is facilitating this process through dissemination materials, briefings and training, and through the development of an advocacy manual for National Societies and an IDRL handbook for lawmakers. The Federation is working with some National Societies in pilot countries with technical support to governments on implementing the Guidelines.

Work is also in progress on how to address humanitarian consequences of climate change, urban violence, international migration and emergent and recurrent diseases. The Declaration 'Together for humanity' from the 30th Conference speaks to these challenges and sets a strategic framework for how to deal with the issues involved.

There is significant increase in the awareness about the risks of climate change among National Societies. The challenge is to translate this

awareness into concrete action. NSs struggle with this question, and with the challenge to programme the action. Early warning – early action initiatives, building capacity to use seasonal forecasts, national disaster management and community based risk reduction are concepts that have gained support and provide basis for continued work.

Council resolutions from 2007, when not linked to the above issues addressed also by the International Conference, dealt with migration, with the Strategy for Restoring Family Links (RFL) and with the general Movement Strategy on better cooperation and coordination within the Movement.

The Federation is developing a policy on migration for adoption by its statutory meetings in Nairobi in November 2009. With the same purpose the ICRC is leading the design of a policy on internally displaced people (IDP).

SC+ Round Table Outcomes...

Exploratory discussions within the context of a 'future-agenda' on 'matters that concern the Movement as a whole' led us to the organising of a Round Table in early September.

With some 25 invited experienced RCRC personalities from around the world and some representatives of Governments, the Commission looked at how well the Movement Statutes respond to today's demands, 22 years since their revision in 1986. The Round Table also discussed cooperation and coordination mechanisms within the Movement and with external partners such as the UN system and international NGOs.

Inspired by the Chatham House Rule

of 'nothing said attributed and no-one quoted' the participants engaged in lively exchanges.

There was wide agreement that the Movement Statutes have served us well. They are flexible enough to adapt to changing circumstances.

However, certain issues raised were deemed important and calling for attention, among them

- The International Conference: How to prepare for it more effectively involving even more the members – governments and National Societies?

The participants felt that fewer issues should be on the Conference agenda with less comprehensive documentation. Better use of information technology in consultations and communications was a further wish.

- Frequency of and interlinkages between the IC and other Movement fora The discussion touched on the role of the CoD in preparing for an IC and questions around the Standing Commission's role and functions.

- Image, profile, communications, 'speaking with one voice' were mentioned perhaps more often than other issues. Many spoke of the need to strengthen the global RCRC voice to reinforce the political relevance for better political input and for better access to donor funding. One RCRC voice/position on issues such as the recent one on cluster munitions was referred to as an encouraging example.

- On cooperation and coordination, the Round Table found it important to continue and enhance the positive trends towards better cooperation within the Movement and in that context, to promote a «culture of positivity» and "learning organisation".

It also found that the Seville Agreement & its Supplementary Meas-

ures continue to provide a good and generally well working framework for disaster response but that they are not sufficient for disaster preparedness or capacity building. Further, the increasing willingness and capacity of NS to act as lead agency in the coordination of humanitarian response by components of the Movement should be considered. The Round Table underlined the significance of the human factor for any cooperation mechanisms to function: to select and train the right people for work in different cultures in a professional and transparent way.

- Cooperation with non-Movement partners – the UN as well as NGOs – would benefit from guiding principles and direction as this aspect is not covered in the Seville Agreement. Neutrality and independence in any cooperation arrangements were seen crucial. Strict adherence to the fundamental principles is what makes the RCRC Movement different – not the principles as such.

On the issue of UN – RCRC – NGOs the Round Table concluded that there is a need for better articulation of the RCRC specific role as an auxiliary to governments and as a partner to Non-Movement actors.

attention such as the interpretation of the role and functions of the Standing Commission, based on article 18 in the Statutes. This task was given to a 'quartet' of SC members. The aim is to reach an understanding, which all parties can join to facilitate cooperation and the work of future Commissions.

Issues relating to the preparation of the International Conferences were parked in the Federation – ICRC led Joint Organising Committee. It was asked to look into ways of further improving the preparations, including how to enhance preparatory consultations in particular with NS. Governments are involved through the Group of Ambassadors, which was established by the Standing Commission when preparing for the 27th Conference in 1999.

The block of issues relating to image, communications and formulating RCRC positions is at the core of Action 8 in the Movement Strategy. Action 4 of the same deals with the complexities of Movement fora and the need to analyse and reduce them by increasing efficiency and effectiveness. Both sets of issues – Movement fora and image and communications issues – were sent to the SC working group on the Strategy. It will in due course present its analysis and recommendations to the Standing Commission.

.... and SC follow-up

The Commission in Mid-October thoroughly discussed the outcomes of the Round Table. We found that many of the cooperation – coordination issues brought up by the Round Table were being addressed by various processes within and between the International Federation and the ICRC or fall under actions in the Strategy for the Movement.

However, some called for specific at-

The Movement Strategy

SC member Steve Carr leads the Working Group on the Strategy for the Movement from 2001 and updated in 2005. The Strategy intends to help the components of the Movement work even better together. The Group has been charged with promoting and monitoring implementation of the Strategy and to work particularly on 2 of the 10 actions.

He is joined in the group by Dr Nomsa Mbere, Botswana Red Cross, Dr Abdel Karim Bensiali, UAE Red Crescent and Prof. Freddy Pederson, Danish Red Cross and former Standing Commission member in charge of this very work. Mr Frank Mohrhauer and Mr Bruce Biber represent the International Federation Secretariat and ICRC, respectively.

The Strategy is comprised of 10 "Actions." In 2007, the Council of Delegates asked the Standing Commission to lead work on Action 4: "Enhance dialogue and consultations within the Movement through better use of existing fora, and improved co-ordination of the agendas of statutory and other meetings."

Furthermore, given the great interest voiced at the Round Table of Movement components in "speaking with one voice," the Standing Commission in October asked the Working Group to pay special attention to Action 8: "Communicate effectively and powerfully about Red Cross and Red Crescent actions and consistently advocate on humanitarian issues of common concern."

At the Pan-African Conference in October 2008, Steve had the chance to speak with many of you about making the most of the Movement fora. The WG has thus enlisted the support of Michele Mercier, formerly of ICRC, and Megan Allday, American Red Cross, to help review the cost benefits and outcomes of Movement meetings. Interviews with representatives of approximately 30 National Societies will be carried out in the coming months. Thank you in advance for your participation in this survey.

I welcome your input into Action 4, Action 8, and any other part of the Strategy. You can contact us at contact@rcstandcom.info or the Chair, Steve Carr directly at scar@prodigy.net.

Nairobi November 2009

The next round of statutory meetings will take place a year from now in Nairobi, Kenya. In addition to the Federation's General Assembly, the Council of Delegates will meet there.

The Commission's advisory group on the agenda and programme of the CoD, chaired by SC member Adama Diarra from Mali and co-chaired by the Secretary General of the Host Society, Abbas Gullet, has had its first meeting and presented its initial thoughts. These have been communicated to all members of the Council in my recent letter for feedback, more ideas and views to help us develop an agenda, which takes in the views of its membership.

I would like to encourage in particular National Societies to share with us their views and ideas. The Council is, after all, the main deliberative body of the Movement and we would like to see an agenda, which is focused and relevant to all.

Finances...

Our budgetary needs are modest in the totality of the RCRC. However, we need and value highly the voluntary support from NS and the contributions by the ICRC and the International Federation, without which we cannot function.

The 2007 Council adopted a new sharing key for covering our costs. It calls on the ICRC, the Federation and National Societies to jointly contribute 1/3 each of our budget, which in turn is based on a 2-year Plan of Action.

Your response to our request for contributions has again been generous. I thank you for that and renew my ap-

peal to the very few still missing contributors to lend us their support yet again as we are highly dependent on it.

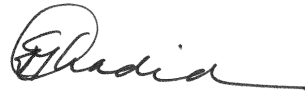
In conclusion

Looking back at the first year of this Commission, I see many good initiatives and also challenges that we are working on or still need to overcome. After the successful meetings in November 2007, I can only reiterate that the challenges ahead of mankind cannot be addressed by States alone – or by us as a global Movement. We must work in partnership for lasting results, to truly respond to the call and expectations of the most vulnerable in the world.

This message is equally pertinent for us within the Movement; working together in unity and good coordination is a prerequisite for successful cooperation with other partners, including States.

A big part of the world will slow down for the festive season around the New Year. I wish all and everyone a very successful year 2009 and look forward to continued cooperation and to seeing you at upcoming meetings and events.

Yours sincerely,



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Chairman
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