

**Dr Massimo Barra
Chairman – Standing Commission**

**Address to the Governing Board of the
International Federation**

Geneva, 19 May 2010

It is a pleasure and an honour for me to address this distinguished Board. This is my first time to address you as Chairman of the Standing Commission why I want to begin by congratulating you, Mr President Konoe. I wish you every success in your demanding task of providing leadership and guidance for our Federation. I also want to extend my congratulations and best wishes to the new Board, to the new members and to those continuing upon re-election in this very important function.

The Federation and its National Societies are important and visible components of our Movement. National Societies are closest to the vulnerable people and to victims of calamities and conflicts. Furthermore, they are there to help empower communities and continuously build capacities to deliver humanitarian assistance in situations of need.

We met recently as a Movement in Nairobi. I am sure we positively remember those meetings, not least because of the beautiful setting but because of the good organisation and the numerous wonderful volunteers, who helped us every step of the way.

At its meeting in February, the Standing Commission evaluated the outcomes of the Nairobi Council and staked out its work in a 2-year Plan of Action, building on the adopted resolutions and on continuation of work in progress. You can find the Plan on our website.

The following milestone will be the statutory meetings, including an International Conference, next year in Geneva. When determining the content of the 2011 meetings, the Commission emphasised the necessity to demonstrate the links to the workshop discussions in Nairobi and to the adopted resolutions.

The Commission further emphasised the need for improved National Society consultations and for early preparations: the Group of Ambassadors should be invited in the 2nd half of this year and major concerns related to IHL and IDRL should be explored with this group. Issues to be brought forward from the previous 30th Conference and from the last Council and the Nairobi workshops must be brought into a 1st general concept to the Standing Commission in September for a 1st agenda framework.

European National Societies at the regional Conference in Vienna had their say on both substance and format, as did the National Societies attending the Mediterranean Conference in Croatia. Consultations will continue at the Asia-Pacific Conference in Jordan in October.

This Governing Board's voice is important and I am looking forward to hear your views.

Without trying to predict in any detail agenda items for the International Conference, permit me to highlight highly likely issues in addition to follow-up action to the resolutions adopted in 2007:

Internal displacement along with the important challenge of 'health care in armed conflict and other situations of violence' will most certainly be among them. The latter deals with the key question of *access* – both delivery of medical services and access to them by victims. We dealt with these in Nairobi and addressed them in two resolutions.

When it comes to the Memorandum of Understanding between the MDA and the Palestine Red Crescent, we are not quite there yet. Implementation is a cause for concern in the Standing Commission but there is still time for real progress before the Conference next year.

To avoid additional dark clouds above next year's Conference, every attempt to should be made and encouraged by the Joint Statutes Commission and other important players involved in resolving the issue of Cyprus. Both entities have submitted their applications. The challenge will not go away, it needs to be addressed in a manner that preserves the unity of the Movement and respects all our statutory obligations.

Turning to other items, which we spent time on in February, let me highlight the Strategy for the Movement and, within it, work done on Movement fora. As many of you know, we have actively involved National Society leaders in the process towards changes already in 2011 to 'reduce complexities and increase efficiency of our Movement fora', as called for in the Strategy. Steve Carr will be here on Friday with a presentation on where the work is heading and what concrete changes are in the pipeline for 2011.

I want to share with you the decision we took regarding the process forward: we have no working group anymore. The SC *in corpore* is responsible and works with Steve Carr, who leads within the Commission. This decision is important for furthering the process in general and especially work within the ICRC and the Federation.

I encourage you to prepare and engage with Steve on Friday to achieve maximum coordination and cooperation on this issue, which affects all components of the Movement.

Turning to the review process, the message from the National Society leaders, many of whom are in this room, was crystal clear:

National Societies want to be involved; they want to be actors in shaping the Movement, to engage in preparations to ensure relevance of issues *from their perspective*.

They want shorter, businesslike meetings and fewer ceremonies with time for networking and exchange.

They want user-friendly resolutions with action points and guidelines for implementation – accompanied by better monitoring.

They look to involvement and engagement of regional structures for dialogue with them both in preparations and follow-up.

They want greater involvement in shaping the final decisions and resolutions for increased ownership of outcomes and better implementation.

The Standing Commission will carefully examine all options taking into consideration views expressed – also by this distinguished body.

We will during the coming months develop concrete proposals for decision in September to provide sufficient time for implementation at next year's meetings. Some longer-term issues, which demand more work and time, will be prepared for implementation as relevant, at the 2013 meetings.

Let me make one more point: all findings and views on the Federation's General Assembly from the extensive review process were forwarded to the Federation secretariat. I hope that relevant Federation bodies will analyse the material and in turn share their findings with Steve Carr to facilitate his work for a comprehensive and inclusive process on Action 4.

I want to inform you that I have made highly interesting visits to two National Societies. I attended the Turkish Red Crescent General Assembly and visited the National Society of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea. Both occasions gave me valuable insight in their work and activities and provided excellent opportunities to exchange views on issues common to us in the Movement. I find such experiences important also in my position as chair of the Commission and for purposes of promoting a better understanding of the roles and responsibilities of various bodies in our Movement.

As leaders, we are responsible and accountable to those who elect us, to our supporters and to the beneficiaries. We are responsible for where we take this Movement.

We must not forget to advocate for and represent humanitarian values and interests outside of our Movement, to mobilise support and understanding of our aims and objectives.

We all want to contribute to a better world and the only way to predict the future is to create it.

I wish you success in your deliberations.