

**Dr Massimo Barra**  
**Chairman**  
**Standing Commission of the Red Cross and Red Crescent**  
**at the**  
**General Assembly of the Turkish Red Crescent**  
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It is a pleasure for me to be here with you at this important event. I thank President Tekin Küçükali and the Turkish Red Crescent for the invitation and look forward to learning more about your impressive National Society.

During your 142 years of history, your Society can list many proud achievements. Still today it performs vital services in the true spirit of humanity for the vulnerable people in Turkish Society and contributes actively to humanitarian assistance internationally. Recently, we have seen the Turkish Red Crescent working side by side with its sister National Societies helping the victims of the massive earthquake in Haiti.

I also want to acknowledge your important contribution as member of the Governing Board of the International Federation upon the completion of your two full terms recently. The successful Europe Conference you hosted in Istanbul is well remembered by all of us who participated.

I read in the mission statement of Turkish Red Crescent that it “provides relief to the vulnerable and those in need by mobilising the power and resources of the community to protect human dignity anytime, anywhere, under any conditions and support the enhancement of the community’s capacity to cope with disasters.” Your vision is to be a “humanitarian aid organisation that embraces, and is embraced by the entire society, constantly enhancing its reputation and quality of service at national and international levels”.

The Red Cross/Red Crescent Movement as a whole certainly offers the most impressive humanitarian network, with hundreds of thousands of active volunteers, reaching into all corners of countries and territories. As partners and auxiliaries to governments, our National Societies, such as the Turkish Red Crescent, offer indispensable complementary services in many areas, most notably within disaster preparedness and response, within the social and health services and youth activities. From the many earthquakes that have hit your country, we know the efficiency of your rescue teams and volunteer first aiders, who are instantly there. Many can learn from your experiences.

As a global Movement, the Red Cross and Red Crescent is respected; we enjoy an image of being ‘the common good’. We are privileged in benefitting from the support of tens of millions of volunteers and members, of people committed to our humanitarian values and principles, from the smallest distant villages to the biggest cities and metropolis. Our greatest strength here in Turkey and elsewhere is, and will always be, that we are present; we are on the spot, all over the globe, in every community, prepared and ready to act when something happens.

Henry Dunant once very accurately said: “The enemy, our true enemy, is not the neighbouring nation; it is hunger, cold, misery, ignorance, routine, superstition and prejudice.”

He could have spoken of the situation today in many countries. In spite of the general positive development in Turkey and elsewhere, we still have the most vulnerable amongst us. They are at the centre of our concerns, our *raison d'être*. The face of vulnerability may change with times and places, but it is always present. As modern and efficient National Societies, we have to constantly be alert to changing circumstances, to adapt to changing needs.

Your history reflects such admirable adaption to changing environments. Born in times of war, your Society has faced hunger, drought, and epidemics in the first years of your Republic. While dealing with these problems, the Red Crescent ably met the needs and helped heal wounds in the recurring disasters.

The Turkish Red Crescent has kept up with developments and has continuously expanded the horizons of its areas of activity to solve the problems of the victims and vulnerable populations.

Friends,

In conclusion, on behalf of the Standing Commission, I want to convey to you the admiration and best wishes of all the members. I feel privileged and honoured to be here with you, to be part of the global Red Cross/Red Crescent family. I salute your members and volunteers and wish you continued strength, wisdom and success in your good work.

Thank you.