

From the Chair

The International Red Cross and Red Crescent Conference, which meets every four years, is just around the corner. When representatives of the RCRC Movement and States party to the Geneva conventions meet at the International Conference Centre in Geneva on 28 November, their focus will be on strengthening International Humanitarian Law (IHL), disaster laws and local humanitarian action and on addressing barriers to health care.

The Standing Commission approved in September all the working documents, including the draft resolutions, which by now have reached all members.

For the first time we have all the documents also on the website – www.rcrcconference.org. This should make it easier than before to prepare as the substance reports and background documents together with the draft final outcomes – the resolutions – can be accessed with minimal effort by those in charge in National Societies and in various Ministries within the States parties.

The RCRC Movement components will meet before the Conference. There is the IFRC General Assembly to deal with affairs internal to the Federation. The Council brings together all National Societies with the ICRC and the IFRC delegations to discuss issues of concern to the Movement as a whole. This year such issues are i.a. defining a Movement position on nuclear

weapons, cooperation with external humanitarian actors, guidance for National Societies working in situations of armed conflict and other situations of violence and issues relating to the Strategy for the Movement. The Council will also hear a report on the implementation of the MoU between the Palestine Red Crescent Society and the Magen David Adom in Israel. All the working documents of the Council can be found on the Standing Commission's website, www.standcom.ch

I look forward to welcoming you all to this year's statutory Movement gatherings, the working modes of which as well as main substance items are outlined in the following pages.



Massimo Barra
Chairman

Highlights in this issue:

- 31st International Conference - November 2011
- SC Election
- Council of Delegates
- Henry Dunant medal

Website:
www.standcom.ch

What's the Conference about?

In September the Standing Commission approved the dispatch of all working documents to the members of the Conference; that is the reports and background documents along with draft resolutions, which it hopes to see as the final outcomes of the Conference. In total, we are looking at 8 resolutions on

- Strengthening legal protection for victims of armed conflicts
- Four-year action plan for IHL
- Strengthening disaster laws
- Respecting and Protecting Health Care in armed conflict and other situations of violence
- Health inequities with focus on women and children
- Furthering the auxiliary role: partnership for stronger NSs & volunteering development
- Migration: ensuring access, dignity, respect for diversity & social inclusion
- Implementation of the MoU PRCS-MDA

year's Conference. The Council of Delegates in November 2009 requested the ICRC and the International Federation to arrange for the provision of a report on implementation of the MoU and AOA to this year's Council and through it to the 31st International Conference.

The draft resolution, to be tabled formally only at the Conference, must be based on the conclusions of the final report that the Independent Monitor, Mr Pär Stenbäck, will present at the upcoming Council, which takes place on 26 November, two days before the opening of the Conference.

As in 2007, the Monitor will provide a written summary of his findings simultaneously with his oral report to the Council of Delegates. He will make a final mission to the parties involved still at the end of October, before the Council and the Conference.

In January 2011, the Monitor stated in his interim report that the MDA had made significant progress in transferring responsibility for its emergency medical service operations in the West Bank to the local authorities or other entities. However, there still remained the need to remove all texts and symbols showing that these ambulances had earlier been administered by MDA.

At the request of the Standing Commission, the International Federation led a group of 4 National Societies to meet with the MDA and the Palestinian Red Crescent in June. Their mandate was to facilitate an understanding on the appearance of the ambulances no longer administered by the MDA in the occupied Palestinian territories. The implementation

MoU between PRCS and Israeli MDA

The one resolution, which is not among the documents available on the website, is on the MoU. It will depend entirely on the state of implementation of the MoU at the time of the International Conference.

The 2007 Conference, in resolution 5, decided to include a progress report on the implementation of the MoU on the agenda of this

of the re-designing is currently ongoing; its completion before the November-meetings is an open question.

During this critical period in the run-up to the Conference, the Standing Commission wishes to forcefully reiterate the resolution of the Conference in 2007, which calls on all authorities concerned to support the full implementation of the MoU.

- Migration: ensuring access, dignity, respect for diversity and social inclusion
- Furthering the auxiliary role: partnership for stronger National Societies and volunteering development
- Health Care in Danger: Respecting and protecting health care in armed conflict and other situations of violence
- Health inequities: reducing the burden on women and children
- IHL

Other resolutions

Without going into the details of the remaining 7 resolutions, it is important to note that they are open to comments and feedback until and still during the Conference. The final content will be negotiated in the Drafting Committee for approval by the last plenary meeting on Thursday, 1 December.

A drafting committee, which will finalise all the formal outcomes – the resolutions – will work throughout the Conference. It is open to all members and is its main negotiating body. The final plenary meeting on Thursday, 1 December, will hear the report on the drafting committee’s work and will take the final decisions, i.e. adopt all the resolutions and possible other outcomes of this 31st Conference.

How will the Conference work?

There are some changes in the way the Conference will work, compared to the 2007 Conference.

The major one is that there will be no general debate. However, there will be two thematic plenary meetings – on IHL and on disaster laws. Five commissions will work throughout Tuesday, the 2nd day of the Conference. Each commission will meet twice, which should allow even smaller delegations to cover all five of them, and their discussions on

Pledges

In addition to the resolutions, participants can initiate or join individual or collective pledges. These have proven both valuable and popular over the years. Participants can pledge concrete actions in support of the themes and outcomes of the Conference, which are measurable and show achievements and progress in national and also regional contexts.

There are already a number of open pledges on the Conference website for any participant

National Society or Government to join.

Workshops

A total of 7 workshops will discuss issues connected to the Conference agenda, although not part of the formal proceedings. They will take place on Monday and Wednesday late afternoons, November 28 and 30 respectively.

More information on the workshops listed below, including key questions to be discussed, can be found on the Conference website:

- Protection for victims of armed conflicts – how can a gender perspective on IHL make a difference?
- Ensuring adequate and timely humanitarian response to migrants' needs and vulnerabilities – the challenges of access
- Best Practices in Strengthening Child Protection
- Using new technology to address the problem of insecurity of access to and provision of Health Care in Conflict and Other Situations of Violence
- National Societies Preparedness and Response to Armed Conflict and Other Situations of Violence
- Humanitarian consequences of climate change
- Strengthening partnerships to tackle humanitarian challenges

An important task of the Conference is to elect the five

(5) members to the Standing Commission, to be joined by the four (4) ex officio members of the ICRC and the IFRC.

The election will take place on Wednesday, November 30 and will start with a roll call at the opening of the day's proceedings. The roll call is important for determining the absolute majority of votes needed to be elected in the 1st round. In a possible 2nd round of voting, in case not all 5 members are elected in the 1st round, a simple majority of votes is sufficient to get elected into the Commission.

Heads of Delegation of Governments and National Societies can vote for a maximum of 5 candidates in the election. The Movement statutes stipulate that the candidates have to be members of a National Society and should be elected based on their personal qualifications and respecting regional representation.

On Tuesday evening, November 29th, there will be an opportunity for members of the Conference to meet the candidates at a session, where they will introduce themselves to the electorate. The session is not part of the formal agenda.

Nominations received to date can be found on both the Conference and the Standing Commission websites. It is to be noted that according to the Statutes of the Movement, nominations can be submitted up to 48 hours before the meeting, where the election will take place.

Side events

A number of side events will take place on Sunday prior to the opening of and during the Conference. They are not part of the Conference agenda. Governments, National Societies, the ICRC and/or the IFRC are organising such side events, which may or may not have a connection to the Conference themes. The events programme can also be found on the Conference website and it is updated regularly as new ones are registered.

officials for approval by the Conference.

After the closing of the Council, there will be approximately two hours of commission-work, where National Society delegations can prepare for the Conference, its working modes and procedures and key substance issues from a RCRC Movement perspective.

Saturday will close with the Henry Dunant Award ceremony, to be followed by a reception hosted by the ICRC and the IFRC. Three individuals will receive the Medal, which is the highest distinction of the RCRC Movement.

Council of Delegates

Before the Conference, all the Movement components will meet on Saturday 26 November to deliberate and decide on issues internal to the Movement.

Items on the agenda include i.a. defining a Movement position on nuclear weapons, cooperation with humanitarian actors external to the Movement, guidance for National Societies working in situations of armed conflict and other situations of violence and issues relating to the Strategy for the Movement. The Council will also hear a report by the Monitor on the implementation of the MoU between the Palestine Red Crescent Society and the Magen David Adom in Israel.

The Council working documents and draft resolutions can be found on the Standing Commission's website www.standcom.ch

A statutory task for the Council preceding an International Conference is to adopt the agenda for the Conference. It further proposes a list of Conference

Thank you!

The outgoing Standing Commission wishes to express its gratitude for the support it has enjoyed during its mandate period 2007-2011. A special thank you goes to National Societies, the ICRC and the IFRC for their cooperation and significant financial and other support. It wishes the incoming Commission much success in promoting cooperation and unity within the Movement and in promoting and supporting the implementation of all the important outcomes of this year's statutory meetings.
