

PROTECTING HUMAN DIGNITY  
PROTÉGER LA DIGNITÉ HUMAINE  
PROTEGER LA DIGNIDAD HUMANA



XXVIII International Conference of  
the Red Cross and Red Crescent, Geneva, 2003

XXVIII Conférence internationale de  
la Croix-Rouge et du Croissant-Rouge, Genève, 2003

XXVIII Conferencia Internacional de  
la Cruz Roja y de la Media Luna Roja, Ginebra, 2003

# daily bulletin

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## Volunteers essential in protecting human dignity



Francine Briffod/Federation

*Geneva Red Cross volunteers celebrate International Volunteers' Day with their president Dr René Rhinow at the CICG yesterday*

A special ceremony to celebrate the essential and untiring work of millions of Red Cross and Red Crescent volunteers around the world, without whom the Movement could not implement its mission to protect and assist the vulnerable, was held in the afternoon session of the 28th International Conference, on 5 December, International Volunteers Day.

Following a short video presentation of volunteers from around the world, a youth volunteer from the Geneva branch

of the Swiss Red Cross, explained what had motivated him to become a volunteer: the chance to share the same values and ideals, based on the Fundamental Principles, with other volunteers from across the globe. "In a world which often discriminates against the young, the Red Cross and Red Crescent trusts us, and offers us the chance to show what we can do by giving us responsibilities", explained 17-year-old Jonathan Roux. The audience then gave a standing ova-

tion to the young Geneva Red Cross volunteers who came to the front of the room.

Federation President Juan Manuel Suárez del Toro, who himself began his career in the Movement as a young volunteer with the Spanish Red Cross, underlined that "the task of protecting human dignity and achieving noble goals such as eradicating poverty and hunger, intolerance and dis-

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crimination, would be impossible without the energy and dedication of volunteers.”

The International Federation has been working in close partnership with United Nations Volunteers (UNV) as well as the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) to pursue common goals to facilitate volunteerism through better legislation. The president paid tribute to the work of the late Executive Coordinator of UNV, Sharon Capeling-Alikaija. “She was a great friend of the Red Cross and Red Crescent and she will be sorely missed”, he said.

The ceremony ended with a speech from Deborah Verzuu, from UNV, who pointed out that UNV volunteers were also very active in combating the spread of HIV/AIDS. She echoed the Federation president’s call to governments to examine all aspects of their legislation which have an effect on the development and growth of volunteering, such as tax legislation, labour laws and legal protection for volunteers, among others. Ms. Verzuu also announced that a joint study was being carried out by the UNV, the International Federation and IPU, on the status of volunteer legislation in a select group of countries. The study will be presented to the 110th inter-Parliamentary Conference in April 2004. ■

## Election of the Standing Commission held



Chris Black/Federation

The International Conference elected five members on Friday to the nine-person Standing Commission to serve for a four year term. They were:

- Dr. Mohamed Al-Hadid, Jordan National Red Crescent Society
- Ms. Janet Davidson, the Canadian Red Cross Society
- Dr. Freddy Karup Pedersen, Danish Red Cross
- Mr. Philippe Cuvillier, French Red Cross
- Mrs. Zoy Katevas de Sclabos, Chilean Red Cross

The process began with the appointment of three tellers and a roll call which established that there were 166 delegations from components of the Movement and 144 from states giving a total of 310 present to vote. The minimum numbers of votes needed

to be elected was therefore 156. Votes were cast in six alphabetical groups to minimize the disruption to the plenary session of the conference which continued as normal.

The result of the ballot was:

Mohamed Al-Hadid	222
Janet Davidson	209
Philippe Cuvillier	173
Freddy Karup Pedersen	173
Zoy Katevas de Sclabos	167
Shimelis Adugna	161
Bana Ouandaogo Maiga	137
Zahirul Amin Khan	80
Rezsö Sztuchlik	54

# Movement pledges to protect human dignity

The Red Cross Red Cross Movement pledged to continue addressing issues such as discrimination, intolerance and people missing in armed conflict at a ceremony during the conference. All Red Cross and Red Crescent National Societies and the States attending the International Conference have been invited to make a pledge on an issue of major concern for them.

“Discrimination, violence, intolerance and lack of respect for diversity represent one of the key challenges to the goal of protecting human dignity,” said Juan Manuel Suárez del Toro, president of the International Federation. “Together, they marginalize individuals and communities. They deny access to services and fuel mistrust, exclusion and abuse.”



Representing the International Federation at a pledge signing ceremony during the conference, Suárez del Toro committed the Federation to continuing to work on non-discrimination and respect for diversity. With this pledge, the Federation demonstrates its firm commitment to protect and promote human dignity.

ICRC President, Jakob Kellenberger, reaffirmed the organization's commitment to resolving the problem of missing people as

a result of armed conflict or internal violence and to assisting their families. The ICRC also pledged to reinforce its cooperation with authorities and organizations to ensure that common guidelines are adopted and used when trying to determine the fate of missing persons and helping their families.



By signing this pledge Kellenberger underlined the ICRC's ambition to push the problem to the forefront of its humanitarian agenda.

Princess Astrid of Belgium also attended the ceremony and, on behalf of the Belgium Red Cross, presented pledges that reflected the four themes discussed at the International Conference which included the missing, weapons, HIV/AIDS and natural disasters. “I am proud to sign these pledges today and I hope more than anything that they will become reality for people in need,” she said.

Promotion and dissemination of IHL and HIV/AIDS related stigma and discrimination are other burning issues for many of the Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies who have made this the focus of their pledges. ■

## Revision to Shôken Fund

The conference was presented with a revision to the Empress Shôken Fund regulations. The fund was established in 1904 and has been supported by the Japanese imperial family, the Japanese government and the Japanese Red Cross ever since. It supports projects which develop National Society capacities and is managed by the ICRC and the International Federation. ■

# Strong auxiliary role requires balance, respect and cooperation

A balanced relationship based on mutual trust, open constructive dialogue and increased cooperative effort is at the heart of the auxiliary role of National Societies to States. Maintaining this balance is vital as the auxiliary role transforms to accommodate new responsibilities and changing contexts, an in-depth study - requested by the 27th International Conference in 1999 - concludes.

“We have become used to speaking frequently of National Societies as an auxiliary to States,” Mrs. Razia Essack-Kauaria, Secretary General of the Namibian Red Cross, told the Conference on Friday. “However, there has been little recent reflection on the real meaning of this in today’s world.”

The auxiliary role of National Societies has broadened beyond its original concept of providing medical services during armed conflict to incorporating a growing role in disaster response and community health. Essack-Kauaria said the study uncovered a lack of common understanding as to the nature of the auxiliary role. This is further complicated by the diverse functions undertaken by National Societies.

However, the study asserts that all National Societies occupy a unique position in their countries – different from that of other organizations – based on status directed by a number of relevant international and national laws and texts. This facilitates a relationship between States and National Societies that must be nurtured through respect and acceptance of criticism when dialogue is undertaken on sensitive humanitarian issues.

The study strongly encourages States to work cooperatively to ensure National Societies maintain the best possible image. Where integrity issues arise, States are asked to support the involvement of

the Federation or the ICRC in resolving these issues. At all times, States are requested to ensure that their actions do not jeopardize a National Society’s ability to follow the Fundamental Principles.

and various actors involved in the conflict is legitimate, and should not be perceived as contributing to military efforts or supporting any particular view or policy. The study also concludes that National Society



Moscow Times

*The auxiliary role of National Societies has broadened beyond its original concept of providing medical services during armed conflict*

As well, States should help create an environment in which the National Societies can be most effective. This includes adopting or revising legislation relating to the voluntary sector, taxation and customs status, and emblem usage.

The study pays particular attention to the auxiliary role in times of armed conflict. While retaining independence is critical, it says contact for humanitarian purposes between the Red Cross or Red Crescent

staff may be utilized by the military medical services, provided the staff’s actions are of a strictly humanitarian nature and the Society has the capacity to respond. The study insists, however, that the National Society be prepared to explain publicly that its functions are humanitarian to preserve the interests of all components of the Movement. ■

*The complete study is available from the International Federation.*

# Report on customary rules of IHL nearing completion

ICRC Vice President Anne Petitpierre today announced that the ICRC report on customary rules of international humanitarian law applicable in international and non-international conflicts is now nearing completion.

Customary law aims at extending the reach and application of international humanitarian law to all types of armed conflicts whatever their nature in order to offer greater protection to the victims and to broaden accountability for violations of IHL.

Petitpierre said: “This study sends a clear message that wherever there is war, and however it is classified, the protagonists – whether States, the military or armed groups – are accountable for their actions according to the law.”

The ICRC was invited to prepare this landmark report at the International Conference in December 1995. Some 250 people from around the globe have contributed to the report and many National Societies were involved in identifying and funding these experts in the eight-year preparation stage.

State representatives will be convened at ICRC headquarters to receive the report immediately after its publication and copies will also be forwarded to foreign ministries and National Societies. “I would like to express my sincere gratitude to all those who have been involved in this unique project”, Petitpierre said.

She recalled the two main reasons for the study. “Firstly, there is a lack of ratification of some humanitarian law treaties. A number of treaties have not yet attained universal adherence. Thus, it



is vital to establish which rules apply when States party to a conflict have not ratified relevant treaties. Secondly, there is a lack of substantive rules for non-conventional armed conflicts. The study has identified rules of customary international law that apply equally in non-international armed conflicts, and that go beyond what is provided for in treaty law”, she said.

She finished by noting that in addition to the clear legal advances that this study represents “it also has huge significance in terms of the signal it sends to all those engaged in armed conflict. International humanitarian law, whether treaty based or customary, represents a clear line in the sand between humanity and inhumanity in war. When the law is sidelined or ignored, that line is crossed, and the most vulnerable suffer.” ■

## The emblems

Christina Magnuson, special representative of the Standing Commission and chairman of its working group on the emblem addressed the conference on Friday morning. She recalled the decision of the 27th International Conference in 1999 which set up by consensus a joint working group to tackle the issue of the emblems.

The report presented to the conference, she said, was a complete review of progress since then.

Christina Magnuson then spoke of the debate in the Council of Delegates on 1 December 2003 and the resolution it had adopted (see *Daily Bulletin no 2*) which recognized the “substantial progress” that had been achieved and which requested the Standing Commission “to give high priority to securing, as soon as circumstances permit, a comprehensive and lasting solution to the question of the emblem, in cooperation with the Swiss government as depository of the Geneva Conventions and other concerned

governments and components of the Movement, on the basis of the proposed Third Additional Protocol.”

On behalf of the Standing Commission she brought resolution 5 of the council to the attention of the conference. The Standing Commission submitted a draft resolution which endorsed the Council of Delegates’ resolution. ■

# Final workshops take place

**Workshop 9** on *Civil society participation in international public-private health partnerships* was organized by the Sierra Leone Red Cross with co-organizers, the American, Danish and Italian Red Cross societies. It was chaired by Dr. Freddy Pedersen, president of the Danish Red Cross. Speakers included Dr. Muctar Jalloh, president of the Sierra Leone Red Cross and Dr. Massimo Barra from the Italian Red Cross.

The workshop considered progress in the public-private health partnerships, participation issues and the future development of such initiatives.

**Workshop 10** on *Where disasters meet: similarities and distinct factors involved in National Society preparedness to respond in contexts affected by both conflict and "natural" disasters* was organized by the British and Ugandan Red Cross societies and the governments of both countries. It was chaired by Michael Mosselmann from the British government's international development department (DFID) and moderated by Teresa Hanley from the British Red Cross. Speakers also included Adam Poulter of the British Red Cross and Robert Kwesiga, secretary-general of the Ugandan Red Cross.

The workshop used the experience of Uganda to review similarities and distinct factors involved in preparedness in the different types of situations and how the National Society can lead the process of responding to the challenges.

**Workshop 11** on *Operational challenges in carrying out humanitarian activities in a changing environment* was organized by the ICRC and the International Federation.

It was chaired by Pierre Krähenbühl, the ICRC's director of operations and Abbas Gullet, the Federation's director of disaster management and coordination. Speakers included Walter Fuellemann and Michel Cagneux from the ICRC and Kalle Loovi and Tor Planting from the Federation.

The debate covered the issue of the safe delivery of humanitarian activities, means of strengthening recognition of RCRC neutrality and independence, conditions under which armed escorts should or should not be contemplated, and the impact of security incidents on operational activities. ■



Chris Black/Federation

## Today's Health Tip

### Healthy return flight

Wear loose, comfortable clothing and loose-fitting, soft shoes. Drink plenty of water (avoid consumption of alcoholic beverages, tea, coffee and cola). Remove your shoes while sitting down and put them back one hour before arrival. Walk and stretch arms and legs every 30 minutes or so. Move your feet as much as possible. Splash water regularly on your face or use a skin moisturising lotion.

Try to sleep according to the local time of your destination – an eye mask and ear plugs will help you to block out distracting light and noise. Cover yourself with a blanket for comfort and to avoid catching cold. Prior to departure you can reduce the prospect of jetlag by getting a good night's sleep. If you are heading west, go to sleep an hour or two later than normal. If you are heading east, go to sleep an hour or two earlier.  
Bon voyage!

Delegates are kindly requested to empty their pigeon holes on a daily basis.

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