

Daily bulletin

Issue 10 | Geneva / Friday 30 November 2007 //

30th International Conference of
the Red Cross and Red Crescent
Geneva, 2007

XXXe Conférence internationale de
la Croix-Rouge et du Croissant-Rouge
Genève, 2007

XXX Conferencia Internacional de
la Cruz Roja y de la Media Luna Roja
Ginebra, 2007

المؤتمر الدولي الثلاثون
للصليب الأحمر والهلال الأحمر
جنيف، عام ٢٠٠٧

Election of five members of the Standing Commission



Conference vice-chair Ms Annemarie Huber-Hotz of the Swiss Red Cross with chair Ms Mandisa Kalako-Williams of the South African Red Cross Society.

The third plenary session of the 30th International Conference began with the election of five members of the Standing Commission. Vice chairmen of the Conference, Ms Annemarie Huber-Hotz (Swiss Red Cross) presided over the start of the election process, which is by secret ballot. There were nine candidates, two from Africa, two from the Americas, three from Asia and two from Europe (see *Daily Bulletin* no 9). Each National Society and State casts up to five votes on the ballot paper.

Ms Huber-Hotz stressed the importance of respect for the Fundamental Principles and of geographical balance when voting. The roll call, first of National Societies and then of States, established that there were 324 delegations present, 172 National Societies, 152 States, the International Federation and the ICRC. The absolute majority needed for election was therefore established as 163.

Only one ballot proved necessary and the result was as follows:

ELECTED

Dr Massimo Barra, Italian Red Cross	213
Dr Mohammed Al-Hadid, Jordan National Red Crescent Society	211
Mr Adama Diarra, Mali Red Cross	187
Mr Steven E. Carr, American Red Cross	182
Mr Eamon Courtenay, Belize Red Cross Society	165

NOT ELECTED

Lady Jocelyn Keith, New Zealand Red Cross	156
Dr Freddy Karup Pedersen, Danish Red Cross	132
Mr William A. Eteki Mboumoua, Cameroon Red Cross Society	110
Mr Tissa Manilal Abeywickrama, Sri Lanka Red Cross Society	83



Taking part in the roll call.

Memorandum of Understanding

Pär Stenbäck was invited to report to the International Conference on the implementation of the Memorandum of Understanding (MoU), which he has monitored. Both societies, Magen David Adom (MDA) and the Palestine Red Crescent Society (PRCS), should be commended for their efforts, he said. However, full implementation remains a problem. Mr Stenbäck then summarized his report (see *Daily Bulletin* no 5).

Since his report to the Council of Delegates, he said, news had come of the deployment of the 5 PRCS ambulances in Jerusalem. He also said that the issue of geographical jurisdiction between the two National Societies had been advanced.

Ambassador Boudewijn J. Van Eenennaam, vice-chairman of the Conference, then reported that an agreement on a revised draft resolution had been reached. He said the consultation he had conducted over the past few days had been special in their constructiveness, which gave hope for the future. Despite well known differences, all those that participated in the process showed a positive and courageous spirit that allowed agreement to be reached.

The discussions were also focused on the facts on the ground, and political positions were put to the background.

The resolution, he said, contains substance and addresses the roles of the main participants as well as the strengthening of the monitoring and reporting process.

The chairman of the Conference, Ms Mandisa Kalako-Williams, then put the revised draft resolution to delegates which they adopted by consensus.

Following approval of the revised draft, many delegations commented favourably on the outcome of the consultation process and welcomed the resolution on the implementation of the MoU. They included the PRCS, the MDA, vice-president of the Conference, Ambassador Juan Martabit, on behalf of the Latin American group, the group of Arab Red Crescent and Red Cross Societies, the American Red Cross, the government of Pakistan on behalf of the Organization of the Islamic Conference, the government of Portugal on behalf of the European Union, the Ghana Red Cross Society, the government of Israel, the government of Egypt on behalf of the African group, the government of Switzerland, the govern-



ment of Iraq on behalf of the Arab group, the government of Canada, the government of the United States and the presidents of the ICRC and the International Federation. ■

The great debate

The humanitarian challenges posed by climate change, migration, urban violence and emergent and recurrent diseases are closely interrelated, and cannot be addressed without meaningful cooperation between governments, the Red Cross Red Crescent and other actors.

“It was widely recognized that these four issues interact with each other,” said Ambassador Ichiro Fujisaki (Japan), rapporteur of the Conference and the man with the difficult task of summarizing and synthesising the 109 statements made by States and National Societies during the general debate.

“It was also stressed that these challenges require partnership at the local and national levels.”

Environmental degradation including climate change

Participants in the general debate emphasized that “climate change affects the poorest people in the poorest countries, those who contribute least to global warming,” said Mr Fujisaki.

Delegations called on National Societies to play an important role in addressing the humanitarian consequences of climate change, by raising awareness about environmental risks and by strengthening disaster preparedness and risk reduction measures.



nificant role in several respects. For example, it can help reinforce social solidarity by providing more opportunities for young people or develop programmes to help re-integrate former child soldiers and street children into society.

In all these activities, it was said that volunteers, particularly the young, can play an important part.

Health

The central role of volunteers was also made clear in statements on the challenges posed by emergent and re-current diseases. A number of dele-

For their part, States were called on to devise comprehensive disaster response plans that use the capacity of National Societies and other like minded organizations.

International migration

Participants in the debate argued that tackling the consequences of international migration was not sufficient. They explained that it was crucial to address the underlying causes that include poverty, unemployment, social exclusion and armed conflict.

Cross border cooperation is key in combating these problems.

Delegations pointed out that the Red Cross Red Crescent Movement has an important role to play in alleviating the humanitarian consequences of migration and that National Societies had a duty to assist migrants regardless of their status.

The profound vulnerability of migrants, women and children in particular, was also underscored.

Urban violence

A number of delegations highlighted the important role to be played by States and National Societies in preventing and reducing urban violence.

They referred to concrete initiatives such as the 2006 Geneva Declaration on armed violence and development.

Participants said the Red Cross Red Crescent Movement can play a sig-

gations expressed concern about the growing impact of health risks, such as HIV, TB and malaria.

Efforts to strengthen National Societies were important, delegations said, so that they can continue to contribute to preventing and fighting epidemics.

“All the representatives shared the view that challenges cannot be met by a single player,” concluded Mr Ichiro. “They have to be met together.” ■



Lebanese Red Cross volunteers.

'Vexed question' of migration

Growing xenophobia in developed countries and state obstruction of humanitarian assistance to migrants is causing alarm among National Societies, the International Conference was told yesterday.

"If there is one issue above all of over-riding concern to National Society governance and management, it is the complex and often ambiguous plight of migrants, asylum seekers, IDPs and other marginalized groups," Dr Muctarr Jalloh (Sierra Leone Red Cross Society) said, reporting on Commission A discussions about the auxiliary role of Red Cross and Red Crescent societies to public authorities in the humanitarian field.

Participants had "returned to this vexed question very frequently, with National Societies commenting that too often they were in the awkward and invidious position of witnessing real humanitarian need, but sometimes denied access by government and invariably facing negative impact with the indigenous population."

The British Red Cross, Dr Jalloh said, had echoed the thoughts of many by asking what steps the Movement should take when a government's political and domestic priorities threatened to compromise an over-riding humanitarian agenda. He cited the case of the Swedish Red Cross which had "tussled with its government over the denial of access to health care for certain groups of migrants".

The International Federation had said the first priority was always to ensure that survival needs were met, and in the event that even basic assistance was being withheld – and Red Cross Red Crescent access denied – the National Society was compelled to advocate vigorously.

The Italian Red Cross, which had described the Mediterranean as a "sea of death", had argued that while advocacy went so far, "often we need to do more" and when necessary be indifferent to public opinion. It had called for the Federation to establish an operational alliance linking National Societies in countries from where migrants originate and those receiving them.

There was general agreement, Dr Jalloh said, that the National Society-government relationship required long-term investment from both sides, and continuous dialogue should be established at all levels to build mutual trust and understanding. A sound legal base was an essential pre-requisite but the law alone was not enough to enshrine and maintain the auxiliary role.

Five auxiliary-role working areas were most frequently mentioned by National Societies, he reported: dissemination of IHL through secondary schools and higher education, and the training of armed forces; disaster preparedness and relief; support to those affected by armed conflict; social welfare; and health and care at the community level. ■

Preserving human life and dignity in armed conflict



When respected, international humanitarian law (IHL) continues to be adequate protection for the victims of today's armed conflicts, the International Conference was told on Thursday.

The rapporteur of the Commission on the Reaffirmation and Implementation of International Humanitarian Law, Jeffrey Chan Wah Teck of the Singapore Red Cross, said IHL had been criticized for not being relevant to modern-day armed conflicts.

"However, studies by the ICRC have concluded that the rules of IHL are adequate today but that the problem is the lack of respect for IHL rules in armed conflict," he said.

During the Commission's deliberations, several delegations noted the complementary nature of IHL, human rights law and refugee law. Numerous delegations commented on the challenges posed to IHL by asymmetric warfare; it was stressed that even if an opposing party does not comply with IHL there is no excuse for a party itself to renege on its obligations to apply IHL.

A large number of delegations spoke on the adverse humanitarian consequences of cluster munitions and the need to prohibit such weapons. This type of weapon was said to violate the principle of distinction.

During the Commission's deliberations, the continued importance of instilling the significance of IHL was also underlined. The upcoming 60th anniversary of the Geneva Conventions in 2009 was identified as a good opportunity to conduct a range of activities to disseminate IHL. ■



IDRL guidelines widely endorsed



International Conference members agreed on Wednesday that legal preparedness is directly linked to reducing human suffering, Ambassador Ahmet Üzümcü (Turkey), rapporteur for Commission C told the plenary yesterday.

Many remarked that that the IDRL guidelines have already proven a useful tool. In particular, they noted that the guidelines are non-binding and adaptable to local circumstances. They allow the Movement to work according to its principles and values in disaster management and conveniently compile existing international norms and best practices.

Participants emphasized the guidelines can be useful to both governments and National Societies, acting as a reference for governments interested in strengthening their legal and policy frameworks, and serving as a checklist of

common legal issues for National Societies and other organizations.

A number of National Societies also expressed their commitment to work with their governments on improving legal

frameworks. National Societies already involved in their countries' disaster management planning were particularly urged to play this role.

Governments, on the other hand, promised to help disseminate the guidelines and encourage dialogue amongst key actors.

Ambassador Üzümcü concluded by repeating calls by some States for the Federation to continue its efforts in this field. "The Federation should be proactive, and continue to lead collaborative efforts on advocacy and research around legal preparedness," he said. "The Federation should also work with and empower National Societies to provide advice to their governments on how to make best use of the guidelines." ■



ICRC President Jakob Kellenberger and International Federation President Juan Manuel Suárez del Toro sign a joint pledge on restoring family links.

Our world, our challenges

The International Conference film shown at the opening ceremony will be available for all conference delegates upon request.

E-mail to: shop.gva@icrc.org

RFL and IHL slideshows

There have been several requests for the slide-shows shown as part of the RFL debate in the Council of Delegates and in the commission discussing IHL. These slideshows will most likely be made into official ICRC products and available upon request.

E-mail to: shop.gva@icrc.org

All photos: International Federation or ICRC