

# Daily bulletin

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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

## 30th International Conference of the Red Cross and Red Crescent



Dramatic acrobatics on ropes suspended from the ceiling and balcony, and a pulsating dance, greeted the delegates as they assembled for the 30th International Conference of the Red Cross and Red Crescent.

### Movement as 'global lookout' for humanity

Chairman of the Standing Commission, Dr Mohammed Al-Hadid, began his welcome address to the International Conference on an optimistic note, convinced that "we *are* what we say; we are the largest humanitarian organization in the world; we are best positioned with the *best potential* to offer real expertise to partners and collaborators."

He pointed out that the conference represented a 'golden opportunity' to form new partnerships to address humanitarian consequences of the present and future. "‘Together for humanity’ is not just a slogan," he said, "it is a serious challenge for all of us."

He likened the Movement to a 'global lookout' for humanity. "Experienced sailors know that when in dangerous, shallow waters, someone must be up on

the main mast to keep a look out ahead. That simple watchman's role has time and time again proved vitally important."

Dr Al-Hadid emphasized climate change as the largest and most immediate risk by far that could be seen from 'our look-out'. "We must focus on the simple truth that change *is happening* and it will inevitably carry humanitarian consequences."



Chairman of the Standing Commission,  
Dr Mohammed Al-Hadid

He highlighted the central role that water plays in most climate-induced disasters and the large population displacements that these threats will bring about. The 'voiceless poor', he said, would pay the heaviest price in the human suffering to come.

"Why are the poor the first to die?" he asked. "Because they often have no choice but to live in the wrong places, where they are unprotected from harsh environmental conditions and at the mercy of overcrowding and poverty."

In closing, Dr Al-Hadid, came back to the fundamental principles. "We have, time and again, proven through the actions of our people that we respect and live by our principles. It is time for us to think how we can take this characteristic of who we are and turn it into even more effective programmes and activities, which could take the first steps towards healing those who have lost their way and turned to hatred as a way of life."

He said the endeavour would require time and conscious effort but would bring results, leaving food for thought with an African proverb: "If you want to go quickly, go alone; if you want to go far, go together." We want to go far and we want to go together to help the most vulnerable people in this world." ■

## Switzerland calls for complementarity and innovation in partnerships

The president of the Swiss Confederation, Micheline Calmy-Rey, appealed to members of the Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement not to fall into the trap of defending particular interests, indicating that she was persuaded that "we will work in a constructive manner, thus respecting the slogan of this conference: Together for humanity."

In her speech at the opening of the International Conference, she called on participants to intensify and further develop partnerships between multiple humanitarian actors. "Everyone has a role to play and we must favour complementarity among the competencies."

She applauded the Movement for taking on in this forum the key issues that have such profound humanitarian impact, namely climate change, international migration, violence and emerging and recurrent diseases. "Without the will to seek out pertinent partnerships, we would not be able to provide an appropriate response to the humanitarian consequences of these threats."

Ms Calmy-Rey also touched on methods and means of warfare and specifically Switzerland's investment in initiatives aiming to clarify the norms of international humanitarian law with regard to air and missile warfare, as well as computer warfare. "Switzerland also supports the ICRC-led process to clarify the concrete meaning of the concept of 'conduct

of hostilities'. We are looking above all for practical solutions aimed at the relevant actors."

She emphasized that it is not enough to point out the rules of international humanitarian law — they must be applied, and mentioned that the International



The president of the Swiss Confederation, Micheline Calmy-Rey

Humanitarian Fact-Finding Commission was established with this goal. "It is not a tribunal, but an investigative body, composed of independent experts. Seventy states from all continents have announced their recognition of the Commission." She encouraged all parties to do the same without delay.

Ms Calmy-Rey closed by saying that she was "convinced that the results of the 30th International Conference would meet our expectations and those of the millions of victims for whom we can make a difference". ■



Mandisa Kalako-Williams, president of the South African Red Cross Society

## Mandisa Kalako-Williams elected to the chair

The welcoming addresses were followed by the reading of the Fundamental Principles in the four working languages of the Conference. Dr Mohammed Al-Hadid then declared the 30th International Conference open. He put to delegates the recommendations for officers agreed at the Council of Delegates. They were accepted and Ms Mandisa Kalako-Williams, president of the South African Red Cross Society, took the chair. After information on the organization of work and a report on the resolutions passed at the Council of Delegates, Ms Kalako-Williams invited the presidents of the Geneva institutions to make their keynote addresses. ■



## A Movement grounded in solidarity

In his keynote address to the 30th International Conference, President Kellenberger of the ICRC spoke of a Movement grounded in solidarity. He told participants that global challenges made good cooperation among all participants, including States, indispensable. This, he stressed, gave the motto of the Conference “Together for Humanity” its full significance.

During his address, President Kellenberger spoke of migration, one of the principal themes of the Conference, and underscored the ICRC’s special concern for those uprooted because of armed conflict. There is no void in the law, he said. If international humanitarian law were fully applied, there would be less or no reason for people to leave their homes.

He spoke also of the tragedy of families separated by conflict and said the ICRC would step up its efforts to help people without news of their loved ones. He said that the ICRC would continue to implement the strategy adopted by the Council of Delegates to boost the Movement’s capacities to restore family links.

Turning to the issue of health, President Kellenberger said the ICRC also intends in the coming years to strengthen its capacity to provide high-quality health services in general and medical care.



He stressed that the ICRC is seeking to rally States to ban the use of certain particularly cruel weapons such as unreliable cluster munitions. As indicated in the Council of Delegates resolution, he said, the ICRC urges governments that support the Oslo Declaration to continue their efforts to conclude in 2008 a treaty prohibiting the use, production, stockpiling and transfer of cluster munitions that cause unacceptable harm to civilians.

Regarding IHL, the ICRC’s President told participants that it remained an apt, if not perfect instrument for addressing the challenges of contemporary conflict. The ICRC has released a publication and report for the Conference on improving compliance with international humanitarian law in these conflicts. ■



## Solidarity in the face of looming humanitarian threats

The grave humanitarian challenges posed by climate change, migration, violence and public-health crises are significant, but they can be faced and overcome if the international community commits to working together to face them. This was the central message of the keynote address given by the Federation's president Mr Juan Manuel Suarez del Toro at the opening of the Conference.

"This Conference is an opportune moment to reaffirm our willingness to extend our cooperation, forge new partnerships and lend humanitarian assistance to the governments of the world," he said.

The "four challenges" were discussed last week at the International Federation's General Assembly, where National Societies worked to identify opportunities for coordinated humanitarian activities.

"Because these problems have grave humanitarian consequences, it is vital for

governments, international organizations and social-welfare and humanitarian organizations – first and foremost the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement – to join forces in addressing them," he said.

"As citizens of the world, we all have a shared responsibility to combat these sources of extreme vulnerability."

Mr del Toro also emphasized the important role of Red Cross and Red Crescent societies, urging governments to support them and to use their unique capacities. As auxiliaries to their public authorities, Mr del Toro said, National Societies can provide invaluable support to emergency, health, and social-welfare services. He also singled out the unique value of Red Cross and Red Crescent volunteers.

"Red Cross and Red Crescent volunteers save lives, not only by responding effectively and mitigating the harmful effects of disasters, but also by their tireless efforts



to prepare for disasters, to reduce risks and to help communities and individuals grow and become stronger," he said.

Mr del Toro closed his remarks by reiterating his call for increased coordination and cooperation amongst the international community.

"While these challenges are clearly enormous, our experience and convictions have taught us that they are not insurmountable," he said. ■



To launch the debate on collaborative action and partnerships to address humanitarian challenges, a panel discussion (not part of the formal agenda) was organized, chaired by Lyse Ducet, a television presenter and special correspondent of the BBC. A film *Our world, our challenges*, opened the debate.

## "Our world, our challenges"



The panel comprised: Dr Han Seung-Soo, the UN secretary-general's special; Ms Ndioro Ndiaye, deputy director-general of the International Organization for Migration; Dr Sima Samar, chair of the Afghanistan Independent Human Rights Commission; Dr David Heymann, assistant director-general of

the World Health Organization; Mr Mawanda Shaban, member of the Youth Commission, from the Uganda Red Cross Society.

A brief round-up of the discussion will appear in tomorrow's Daily Bulletin. ■