



**150 years of humanitarian action**  
**Council of Delegates of the International  
Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement**  
Sydney, Australia, November 2013



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**COUNCIL OF DELEGATES  
OF THE INTERNATIONAL RED CROSS  
AND RED CRESCENT MOVEMENT**

Sydney, Australia  
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**Implementing  
Resolution 1 of the  
2011 Council of Delegates  
(Working towards the elimination of nuclear weapons)**

**BACKGROUND REPORT**

**Document prepared by  
the International Committee of the Red Cross and the International Federation of Red  
Cross and Red Crescent Societies in consultation with National Societies**

Geneva, October 2013

**Implementing  
Resolution 1 of the  
2011 Council of Delegates  
(Working towards the elimination of nuclear weapons)**

**Developments in the nuclear disarmament debate since 2011**

There have been significant developments since the adoption of Resolution 1 of the 2011 Council of Delegates (Working towards the elimination of nuclear weapons). At the multilateral level, the humanitarian consequences of nuclear weapons are being increasingly recognized and discussed among States. The Conference on the Humanitarian Impact of Nuclear Weapons, hosted by the Government of Norway on 4 and 5 March 2013, was attended by 127 governments. This conference was a significant event as it was the first multilateral governmental meeting devoted to assessing the immediate and long-term effects of nuclear weapons as well as the challenges in assisting victims.

In addition, more than 80 countries attending the Preparatory Committee of the 2015 Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT, 22 April to 3 May 2013) signed on to a statement read by South Africa expressing deep concern about the "catastrophic humanitarian consequences" of nuclear weapons and stating that these consequences "must be at the core of all deliberations on nuclear disarmament and nuclear non-proliferation." This statement made specific reference to the 2011 Council of Delegates resolution, highlighting that the resolution "emphasized the incalculable human suffering associated with any use of nuclear weapons, and the implications for international humanitarian law." The statement followed interventions delivered by Switzerland in 2012 at the NPT preparatory meeting (on behalf of 16 countries) and the UN General Assembly (on behalf of 35 countries), which also highlighted the humanitarian consequences of nuclear weapons.

The UN Open-ended Working Group on Taking Forward Multilateral Nuclear Disarmament Negotiations (UNOEWG) was established by the 2012 UN General Assembly to develop proposals to advance nuclear disarmament negotiations and held meetings in May, June and August 2013. It also discussed nuclear weapon use in terms of its humanitarian consequences and international humanitarian law (IHL). These issues are also expected to be raised during the High-Level Meeting on Nuclear Disarmament being convened by the UN General Assembly on 26 September 2013 in New York.

These developments are positive signals that the debate on nuclear weapons is being re-framed in humanitarian terms. Further discussion of the humanitarian consequences and IHL aspects of nuclear weapons is likely to continue. As a follow-up to the March 2013 meeting convened by Norway, the Government of Mexico will host a second conference on the humanitarian impact of nuclear weapons in February 2014. In addition, the concerns and messages about nuclear weapons are also likely to be raised by States and organizations in the ongoing work of the UN General Assembly, the UNOEWG (if it continues) and the Preparatory Committee of the 2015 NPT Review Conference.

**Movement activity to implement Resolution 1**

There has also been significant activity on the part of the Movement, with the ICRC, the Federation and many National Societies helping to inform the debate about nuclear weapons in humanitarian terms at both the national and international levels. A number of the government statements in the meetings mentioned above referred to the 2011 Council of Delegates resolution and the Movement's concerns about nuclear weapons. There was also a strong Movement presence at the 2013 conference convened by the Government of

Norway, with the ICRC president and ICRC and National Society experts addressing participants. Twelve National Societies attended the conference as part of the Federation delegation<sup>1</sup> and three (the Austrian, Japanese and Tuvalu Red Cross Societies) as part of their respective government delegations. The Movement's messages on nuclear weapons were also conveyed by the ICRC to the UNOEWG and the Preparatory Meeting of the NPT Review Conference. Many National Societies have engaged in dialogue with their governments and domestic civil society organizations on this issue and several have ongoing public campaigns to communicate the concerns about nuclear weapons to the general public.

Two National Society workshops were held to help further the Movement's implementation of Resolution 1 of the 2011 Council of Delegates. The first workshop was hosted by the Austrian Red Cross in November 2012 and a follow-up event was organized by the Japanese Red Cross in May 2013. These meetings updated National Societies on the developments in the multilateral nuclear disarmament discussions and provided an opportunity for the components of the Movement to share experiences on implementing Resolution 1. The workshops also resulted in the development of a network of National Societies active in promoting the Movement's concerns and position on nuclear weapons.

Overall, Resolution 1 of the 2011 Council of Delegates has significantly contributed to re-framing the debate about nuclear weapons in humanitarian terms. In addition, its implementation by National Societies, the ICRC and the Federation has played a vital role in positioning the Movement in international and domestic discussions. It has also helped to make States, international organizations and civil society aware of the Movement's experience responding to the atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, and of the scale of the challenge to provide adequate humanitarian assistance if nuclear weapons were to be used today. The Resolution has helped emphasize the need for credible action by States to ensure that nuclear weapons are never used again and for an international agreement to prohibit and eliminate them, based on existing commitments and international obligations.

### **The draft resolution and action plan for the 2013 Council of Delegates**

Resolution 1 of the 2011 Council of Delegates remains the basis for the Movement's position and message on nuclear weapons. Nevertheless, the 2013 Council of Delegates is a valuable opportunity to take into account international developments over the past two years. It is also a chance to consolidate and share the experiences of the Movement's components working on this issue and to help National Societies in their efforts to implement Resolution 1.

The ICRC has prepared a draft resolution and an action plan for consideration at the 2013 Council of Delegates. These documents are intended to help interested components of the Movement consider activities to advance the goals of Resolution 1. They were first presented and discussed at the National Society workshop held in Japan in May 2013 and subsequently sent to all National Societies for comment in early June.

By approving the draft resolution, the Council of Delegates will adopt a four-year action plan on implementing Resolution 1 of 2011. In essence, the action plan is a guide which identifies a range of activities that National Societies may undertake to raise awareness of the Movement's position and views on nuclear weapons. Many of the activities contained in the guide were discussed at the National Society workshops in Austria and Japan.

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<sup>1</sup> The Red Cross/Red Crescent Societies of Australia, Denmark, Egypt, Iraq, Japan, Lebanon, the Netherlands, Nigeria, Norway, Qatar, Sweden and Trinidad and Tobago.

It is important to note that neither the resolution nor the action plan require any component of the Movement to take part in any particular activity. The action plan, in particular, recognizes that, in implementing Resolution 1 of the 2011 Council of Delegates, National Societies are free to take into account the specific societal and political contexts within which they work.

The action plan has been given a four-year time frame. This time frame was chosen to give National Societies enough time to undertake as many of the activities as appropriate while at the same time ensuring that the action plan remains relevant in the broader multilateral context. Over time, certain actions may become less relevant, or new ones required, as the international work on nuclear weapons evolves.