

## **Council of Delegates 2013**

### **REPORT ON THE WORKSHOP**

#### **WORKSHOP TITLE**

**Chair: Dr. Al-Hadid, Jordan RCS**  
**Rapporteur: Ethel Kaimila, Malawi RC**

#### **(A) EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

The workshop contributions, from the panelists and the participants alike, demonstrated clearly the degree to which the Fundamental Principles are considered valuable and relevant by all components of the Movement. There was sharing of how the Fundamental Principles were strongly embedded in personal values that motivate our work in Red Cross and Red Crescent, as well as of good practice and reflection on the manner in which the Fundamental Principles contribute to Red cross/Red Crescent identity, and also how they enable us to bring assistance and protection to the victims and most vulnerable, in particular the principles of Humanity, Impartiality and Neutrality. Challenges that are faced with the application of the Fundamental Principles were also discussed, in particular challenges in the application of Unity and Independence. It was recognised that 2015 will mark the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the adoption of the Fundamental Principles, and that this anniversary should be marked. There was considerable support voiced for the training and education of youth, volunteers, staff and governance in the Fundamental Principles, both in their substance and in their application, and for the inclusion of training on Fundamental Principles in all Red Cross Red Crescent trainings. It was proposed, and accepted, that there be a joint programme of further work on the contextual application of Fundamental Principles. Such an initiative will be complementary to existing and on-going capacity building efforts, and will take the form of a series of regional workshops on dilemmas faced in the field and on how the Fundamental Principles guide their solution ahead of the 2015 International Conference. There is to be further consideration given to the way in which governments will be involved in this process. The concluding statement was that the Fundamental Principles define our identity and safeguard our work, and that by binding us together they make us stronger as a Movement.

#### **(B) GENERAL OBSERVATIONS**

##### **- *Speakers***

The speakers shared their thoughts on the importance and relevance of the Fundamental Principles in their work:

Matthias Schmale from the IFRC gave a summary of findings from a consultation process conducted over the past months in which IFRC, ICRC and individuals of 115 Red cross Red Crescent Societies shared their opinions on the contemporary relevance and importance of Fundamental Principles.

Ms. Berna Beyrouthy of the Lebanese Red Cross eloquently described the situation of Lebanon and the context in which Lebanese Red Cross volunteers operate. She

described how challenging adherence to the Fundamental Principles can be in a sectarian environment, and also how essential this was. She described the Fundamental Principles of Humanity, Impartiality and Neutrality as a beam of light in what can be an ugly, dark world.

President Diallo of the Senegalese Red Cross described a recent dilemma face by the Movement, which challenged the principle of Unity. In being asked to consider the presence of two National Societies on the island of Cyprus, the Movement was forced to weight the principle of Unity against our ability to be present and able to provide assistance to the entire population of Cyprus. In the end he described how a compromise had been found that enables the Movement to meet its humanitarian mission.

Dr. Kalbanau of the Belarus Red Cross identified the Fundamental Principles as the foundation of our Movement. He noted their uniqueness and their importance. He went on to describe some of the complications that can arise in the application of the Fundamental Principles, particularly when NS are faced with delicate situations of a political or religious nature. He mentioned in particular the principles of Unity as challenging for NS.

Ms. Amal Emam of the Egyptian Red Crescent described the importance of Fundamental principles in the response to the civil unrest that followed the Arab Spring in Egypt. She continued to give an emotional plea for support to skills-based training of youth and volunteers, along with the 7 4 7 (7 skills for 7 fundamental principles) approach, starting from today, so that we can continue “walking the talk”, and underlined the relevance of YABC in this regard.

Philip Spoerri from the ICRC complimented the panellists and described the proposed way forward for a joint initiative that would lead to a substantial celebration at the 2015 International Conference. He noted the importance of the contextual application of the Fundamental principles. The nature of the initiative proposed would consist of regional workshops and of other innovative ways of engaging on the topic, and that the nature of state involvement would be carefully considered.

#### *- Others*

There was a high level of participation from the participants, with nineteen participants making statements:

The representative of Samoa RC reflected on the importance of commitment to the Fundamental Principles, and of the power that components of the Movement have in changing attitudes.

The representative of Nigeria RC noted the challenges facing National Societies, particularly with regard to the application of Independence. He also noted the importance of necessity of support for national Societies to enable them to better apply their principles.

The representative from Palestine RC contributed some comments on the background paper to the workshop, and emphasised the importance of the Fundamental Principles in how we act and in how we are perceived.

The Australian RC representative complimented the panellists and drew attention to the potential role for governments in the approaching 2015 anniversary of the Fundamental Principles. He questioned how we should constructively engage with governments on the topic of Fundamental Principles. Australia RC welcomed phase 2 of the proposed initiative and registered their interest in taking part in the accompanying advisory group.

The German RC representative offered an example of the application of fundamental principles from the perspective of a National Society neither involved in conflict nor disaster-prone. She noted that a major challenge in this context was distinguishing the National Society from other civil society actors.

The representative from the Philippines RC noted the difficulty for national societies to adhere to the principle of Independence. He also noted some difficulties currently being faced in the humanitarian operation underway in the Philippines. The Chair recalled that governments have commitment under IDRL with regard to disaster logistics.

The representative from Ghana RC commented on the value of impartiality and how it is universally reassuring that an impartial humanitarian actor is present in every country, should there be a need for assistance. He also drew attention to the fact that Movement relations transcend politics, as exemplified by the good relations within the movement between the Palestinian RC and the Israeli RC.

The representative from Brazil RC shared an example of good practice. He talked about their first aid programme in primary schools and the contextual approach adopted to better explain the Fundamental Principles to this audience.

The representative from DRC RC noted the challenge of applying the principle of Unity in the Belgian context. He also reaffirmed the crucial role of volunteers in the Movement.

The representative from Israel RC described the application of impartiality and neutrality in Israel, and confirmed the good relations within the Movement of National Societies whose states political relations are traditionally tense. She questioned how we might transfer this good working relationship from within the Movement to our respective states and civil societies.

The representative from Ethiopia RC emphasised the role of the Fundamental principles and of the use of new technologies in Movement communications. He affirmed that only through practical action can we ensure the relevance of the Fundamental Principles into the future.

The representative from Sweden RC described the promotion of a principle-based approach in Sweden.

The representative from Iraq RC noted the importance of a Movement approach and a mutual understanding of approach in enabling access to populations in need.

The ICRC representative noted that, although the principles were formally adopted in 1965, their origins can be traced back to the founding of the ICRC and of the Movement. He clarified that states are bound to respect NS adherence to the FP. He pledged ICRC support to NS efforts to apply the FP.

The representative from Italy RC highlighted the importance of clear and proper understanding of the Fundamental Principles. In terms of challenges he noted that advocacy and neutrality were not impossible to reconcile, that in fact the principle of neutrality allows for the Movement to advocate against suffering and violence. He voiced his conviction that the seven Fundamental principles should not be changed.

The representative from the Netherlands RC highlighted the issue of dissemination and awareness raising amongst immigrant communities and the important potential role of this in limiting the influence of extremism. He recognized a key role for Movement actors in this type of activity.

The representative of Tajikistan RC noted the importance of the application of fundamental principles in a conflict context, both as a means of operating, and as a means of protection for their staff and volunteers. She went on to highlight the importance of public and state awareness of this, so that such protection would not be abused or misused.

The representative from Russia RC recognized the importance of peacetime dissemination as a means of limiting problems that may occur in times of crisis. He noted that the Fundamental Principles are what separate the components of the Movement from other civil society organisations. He described the Fundamental Principles as all being of equal importance. In particular he commented on the importance of independence and impartiality.

The representative from Thailand RC registered their support for the celebration in 2015 of the anniversary of Fundamental Principles.

### **(C) CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

The chair concluded that the Fundamental Principles define our identity and have served us well over the past 48 years. He noted that the Fundamental Principles are embedded in our personal values, present in different cultures, beliefs and upbringings. He commented on the power of the Fundamental Principles in safeguarding Movement actors in the course of their work. The Fundamental Principles as shared by the youth panelists are at the frontline of our daily work, particularly in armed conflict. He noted that there are challenges in the application of the Fundamental Principles, particularly in the application of Independence, Neutrality and Unity, but nonetheless noted the strength with which they imbue the Movement when we act together.

The Chair confirmed support for the proposed initiative to move forward, and that the participants would be together again in 2015 to celebrate the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the FP.