



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



## **Council of Delegates**

Sydney, Australia: 17 November – 18 November 2013

### **REPORT ON THE WORK OF WORKSHOP 8**

18 November 2013, 11.00-13.00

#### **MAKING THE MOST OF THE INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE: OUTCOMES OF THE 31ST INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE (2011) AND PREPARATIONS FOR THE 32ND INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE (2015)**

Chair: Nikki Rattle, former Secretary-General, Cook Islands Red Cross and past chair, 31st International Red Cross of the Red Cross and Red Crescent

Rapporteur: Jelena Darmonovic-Dubak, Secretary-General, Montenegro Red Cross

Aide Rapporteur: Natalya Wells, ICRC; David Fisher, IFRC

# REPORT TO COUNCIL

*Presented by: Jelena Darmonovic-Dubak, Rapporteur*

## **SPEAKERS:**

- Knut Dörman, Head of International Law, ICRC
- Elise Baudot, Legal Counsel, IFRC
- Emilie Gollier, Austrian Red Cross
- Steve Carr, American Red Cross

## **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY (MAX HALF PAGE - This will be used to report to the CoD plenary on the outcomes of the WS) :**

The International Conference is a privileged opportunity for the Movement to set an agenda for a high-level discussion with states. We have seen important success stories, such as around small arms control and disaster law, where the Conference has played a powerful role in creating momentum on humanitarian issues. However, many participants in this workshop do not feel that the Conference is meeting its full potential.

Participants acknowledged the importance of thorough preparation before the Conference and serious work in implementation between Conferences to make the tool effective. In addition, the topics must be chosen very carefully. They should be core concerns of the Movement and interesting to states, which should be involved as much as possible. We should try to avoid duplication of topics addressed in other fora. We should aim for a Conference that is globally relevant, distinctive but also linked up to other international developments.

National Societies shared the challenges and good experiences they have had in preparing for the Conference and implementing resolutions and pledges. National Societies also shared lessons learned on effective ways to engage with states. They called on the Standing Commission, IFRC and ICRC to ensure a highly consultative approach in the preparation of the agenda for the 32nd International Conference in 2015.

## **KEY POINTS RAISED:**

- Over time, the International Conference can create new humanitarian norms, such as in IHL and disaster law, as well as specific commitments on humanitarian issues.
- We need to decide what image we want for the International Conference – is it an expert meeting or a political event?
- The topics of the International Conference need to be better focused and truly relevant to the Movement and to states. To do this, states need to be brought into the conversation sooner.
- The commitments we make in resolutions and pledges need to be measurable and achievable and expressed in a short format.
- Key obstacles to implementation of resolutions and pledges include: the political climate, change-over in the relevant interlocutors in government, and a mis-match of commitments and available resources.
- Pledges are seen as a useful tool for engaging with government, including on topics beyond the resolutions

## **CONCLUSIONS:**

- There is a need to reinvigorate the International Conference – to make it feel more vital to states and members of the Movement and to interest the general public in key humanitarian issues.
- The topics of the International Conference should not be 50% ICRC and 50% IFRC – they should take into account what states want.
- We must invest more in preparation for the International Conference, both at the international level through permanent missions and at the national levels, making full use of national IHL committees
- We must also invest in implementation as well as reporting on implementation to show our seriousness.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

- Encourage higher-level representation of states at the International Conference and engage a broader spectrum of governmental agencies.
- Consideration should be given to organizing regionally both in the preparations and at the International Conference itself.
- The International Conference should be made a permanent agenda item on national IHL committees and their membership should be extended to include ministries engaged with the various topics of the Conference.
- Convene preparatory meetings of permanent missions not only in Geneva but also in New York to ensure all countries are involved.
- The timing of the Conference should be eventually shifted to earlier in the year so as not to compete with key international meetings.
- The IFRC and the ICRC should develop guidance on what implementation might mean for each resolution. They should also provide training to National Societies on how to participate effectively, particularly in the drafting committee.
- There should be greater use of the internet and social media, including in pre-conference discussions of draft resolutions and at to promote discussion at the conference itself.