

daily bulletin

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Progress made on Movement Strategy

HRH Princess Margriet congratulated the Movement for the progress made on implementing the Strategy for the Movement, adopted in 2001.

Princess Margriet reminded delegates that the Standing Commission had appointed a task force of experts to answer two key questions: "Are we on track with implementation, are we progressing as we envisaged? And is the Strategy seen as relevant to the components?"

The task force's conclusions were clear, "we are on track with implementation and yes, the components consider it relevant." Of 81 National Societies that responded to a survey, 83 percent reported that they had taken specific steps to implement at least some of the 17 actions contained in the Strategy.

The Strategy's first objective focused on strengthening all the Movement's components. Princess Margriet noted that National Societies believed developing a



Sowetans sing for World AIDS Day

The World Council of Churches, UNAIDS, the Ecumenical Advocacy Alliance and the International Federation joined forces to mark World AIDS Day on 1 December. The event, held at the headquarters of the World Council of Churches in Geneva, was highlighted by speeches and a stimulating musical performance by the Soweto Red Cross volunteers choir from South Africa.

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Chris Black/Federation

Council of Delegates first plenary session

HRH Princess Margriet opened the Council of Delegates by welcoming three new societies and reminding delegates that it was World Aids Day. She announced that the morning session would be devoted to the preparation of the 28th International Conference. The Council then elected Jacob Kellenberger (right) as chairman. ■



Thierry Gasmann/ICRC

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Movement-wide approach to capacity building must be the highest priority. While Societies reported that the Strategy had improved the focus on this priority, there was need for clarification as to what capacity building actually entailed. Maintaining integrity in an increasingly complex humanitarian climate was also identified as critical. Here again, it was mentioned that ensuring a clear, shared definition was crucial to success.

Another key objective of the Strategy was improved cohesiveness between all components of the Movement. The report found that harmonization of the work of the ICRC and the Federation, and collaboration within the Movement, was increasing.

Of greatest importance were the experts' findings that individuals in the various components associated themselves with their employer much more readily than with the global Movement. "I cannot stress how important it is that we under-

stand the perception of our Movement," Princess Margriet said when addressing the image of Red Cross Red Crescent as one humanitarian entity. "To work on this sense of unity is not a goal in itself United, we can do a better job of reaching out to the victims...."

The task force report made recommendations on improving the Strategy in the interests of the entire Movement. Progress toward the Strategy's implementation will be reviewed again in 2005. ■

Report on the work of the Standing Commission

Thierry Gassmann/ICRC



HRH Princess Margriet was given the floor to report on the work of the Standing Commission since 2001. She began by recalling her skepticism about the usefulness of the Standing Commission in the past, but it had been the potential to promote harmony and coherence in the Movement that had changed her mind.

In 2001 the Council asked the Standing Commission:

- To continue to find a comprehensive solution to the question of the emblems
- To follow up on the implementation of the Movement Strategy
- To follow up the Seville Agreement
- To prepare the 2003 Council and the 28th International Conference

The work of the Standing Commission in these areas was supported by three working groups and a task force which drew on the "intellectual input and diversity of National Societies and the expertise of the ICRC and Federation headquarters."

The working group responsible for preparing the International Conference had been chaired by Dr Mohammed Al-Hadid, that preparing the Council of Delegates chaired by Mr. Tadateru Konoe and that promoting a solution for the emblem had been chaired by Mrs. Christina Magnuson. The task force chaired by Mrs. Helena Korhonen focused on mechanisms for monitoring and evaluating the implementation of the Movement Strategy. ■

Preparation of the 28th International Conference

Dr Mohammed Al-Hadid presented the revised provisional agenda for the conference which was adopted. Two changes had been made since the agenda was sent to delegates, the withdrawal of the item on changing the statutes of the Movement

since the requisite diplomatic conference had not taken place, and the merger of commissions A1 and B1 with the plenary debate on contemporary challenges which meant that the commissions would start on Thursday.

Dr Al-Hadid presented to the Council proposals for the chairmanship and other officers for the conference which were adopted. ■

The emblem

The report on the emblem was presented by Mrs. Christina Magnuson. She began by recalling the efforts over the past four years to find “a comprehensive solution, as rapidly as possible, which is acceptable to all parties in both substance and procedure”, the task given to the joint working group set up by the 27th International Conference.

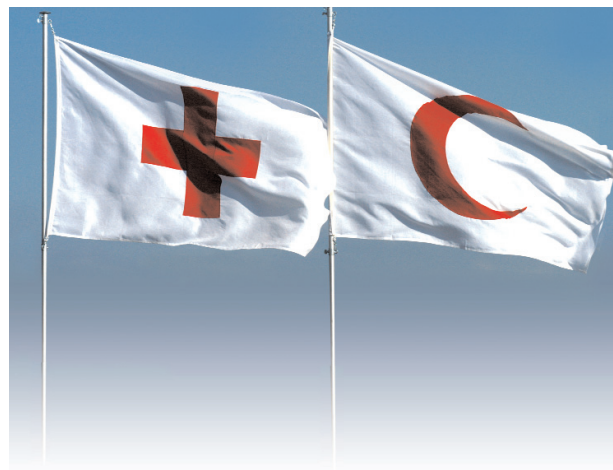
She acknowledged that the task had been difficult for the Movement and had even challenged its unity. But the outcome had been consensus around the idea of an additional emblem created though an additional protocol to the Geneva Conventions. It would provide a solution for those National Societies which had problems with the existing emblems and be “an effective tool with which to enhance the protection of war victims.”

“There is no doubt that there is an urgent need for an additional protective emblem which could be used in those circumstances where the existing emblems do not provide the necessary protection”, she said.

Mrs Magnuson referred to the grave circumstances in the Middle East that led to the postponement of the 2000 diplomatic conference to adopt the additional emblem. She expressed solidarity with “the victims of that violently tragic situation.”

“Every passing day, “she said, “makes a solution to the emblem problem more urgent. Delegates in the field are increasingly confronted with threats to their safety and challenges in a growing number of conflicts where the red cross and red crescent emblems are no longer perceived as symbols of neutral and impartial humanitarian action.”

“We have reached a point of no return...the way is open and the necessary mechanisms are in place. However, the edifice we seek to construct remains unfinished. It still lacks the cornerstone that only the states can lay through the adoption of the new additional protocol”



She expressed the hope that the unity of the Movement on this issue would help the states to understand that it was now up to them to take it forward. “By adopting an additional protocol that creates an additional emblem devoid of any political, national or religious connotation, they will not only be shouldering their responsibility towards the Movement by enabling it to achieve the full universality to which it aspires, they will also be strengthening its very foundation: the effectiveness of its action and its moral authority.”

Numerous National Societies contributed to the debate and the points raised were answered by Mrs Magnuson. ■

National Societies as auxiliaries to public authorities

In her presentation of the study ‘National Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies as auxiliaries to the public authorities in the humanitarian field’, Razia Essack-Kauaria, of the Namibian Red Cross Society, reminded delegates that they had both the opportunity to discuss the report itself and to use the conference to generate the interest of governments in the study and its conclusions. She told the Council how in compiling its report the International Federation had examined existing legal provisions and conducted interviews and telephone conversations with leaders of National Societies, the secretariat in Geneva and the ICRC.

In the discussion which followed, delegates welcomed the report as ‘well-balanced’ and ‘exciting’, and praised its ‘holistic approach’. It was pointed out that the unique role of National Societies as auxiliaries, which distinguished them from NGOs, had changed over the years, notably since the end of the Cold War..

Some National Societies expressed the need for urgency in dispelling confusion and clarifying their auxiliary role, while others urged a flexible approach to allow for the different circumstances in which they functioned. ■

Today sees the inauguration of the "Pont des Conventions de Geneve" as the conventions are hung to decorate the Pont du Mont-Blanc. A ceremony to mark the inauguration will take place at 3pm in the Jardin anglais, followed by a reception in Restaurant La Potiniere.

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In his address, Federation President Juan-Manuel Suárez Del Toro Rivero noted. The Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement has millions of volunteers and staff worldwide, many of whom are HIV positive. This message was ably illustrated by the Soweto Red Cross volunteers, who provide a crucial service to people living with HIV/AIDS in their community, and in the case of volunteer Paul Musi who gave a moving personal testimony about his seropositive status, also benefit from the support that the Red Cross extends to its members. ■

Working group for Seville Agreement

The Council of Delegates strongly reaffirmed its support for the 1997 Seville Agreement the main basis for cooperation among the various components of the Movement as they face new challenges in an ever more violent world.

ICRC operations director Pierre Krähenbühl and Federation deputy secretary general Abbas Gullet, as well as the representatives of several National Societies, recalled that since its adoption the Agreement had been a solid framework for Movement operations in many parts of the world.

All participants stressed that despite its success much remained to be done to enhance the application and implementation of the Seville Agreement, particularly in view of the increased complexity of humanitarian operations and the dangers faced by humanitarian workers in the field.

Faced with these new challenges the Council called on the Standing Commission to set up an ad hoc working group to identify further mechanisms to enable the Movement to implement the Seville Agreement fully.

Some of the main tasks of the working group will be to:

- identify the main problems that have arisen over the past six years in implementing the Seville Agreement
- define procedures for the involvement of Movement components in operational contexts with a special focus on the role of the host National Society and of National Societies working internationally
- conduct further studies and make recommendations regarding situations where a National Society might undertake the role of lead agency within its own territory. ■

Biotechnology, weapons and humanity

A report was presented by Mr. Yves Sandoz of the ICRC. He recalled the enormous potential of biotechnology to benefit humanity but also the deep concern of the risk that advances in that area could be put to hostile use. "The danger is real. Biotechnology is becoming cheaper and knowledge of it more widespread...its use for hostile purposes could be catastrophic," he said.

He recalled that in 2002 the ICRC had urged governments, the scientific and medical communities, industry and civil society "to prevent the hostile use of biological agents by taking a range of preventive measures."

This required them to reaffirm, implement and reinforce "existing rules of international law banning the use of biological weapons". The ICRC was also seeking a declaration by states within the context of the 1972 Biological Weapons Convention to reinforce its application.

"Action by the scientific and medical communities should include developing principles of practice, and effective regulation of research programmes, dangerous pathogens and other biological agents," he said. One of the problems was the low level of awareness in some industrial and academic circles.

He believed the Movement had an important role in generating greater awareness of the threats and encouraging action. "There is a danger that germs will become increasingly attractive for use in warfare and to spread terror," he said, "the Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement as a whole needs to send a firm message that the absolute taboos against poisoning and the deliberate spread of disease remain crucial in the 21st century and must be reinforced." After a debate the Council adopted the proposed resolution. ■

Today's health tip

If possible, have a short nap (10 to 20 minutes) during the day. And at night, put your legs up on two pillows.