

Daily bulletin

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Council of Delegates of
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Conseil des Délégués
du Mouvement international de
la Croix-Rouge et du Croissant-Rouge,
Genève, 2007

Consejo de Delegados
del Movimiento Internacional de
la Cruz Roja y de la Media Luna Roja,
Ginebra, 2007

مجلس المندوبين للحركة الدولية
للصليب الأحمر والهلال الأحمر
جنيف، عام ٢٠٠٧

Council of Delegates gets underway



Dr Mohammed Al-Hadid, chairman of the Standing Commission delivered his keynote speech to the Council, which he said would be dealing with “some important family matters” and debating future challenges and partnerships.

“We are best positioned with the best potential....to allow informed choices to be made,” he said, when facing up to the four challenges before the 30th International Conference: environmental degradation including climate changes, urban violence, international migration, and emergent and recurrent diseases and other public health concerns. The key to action, he said was preparedness and risk reduction.

To be fully effective, he believed the Movement needed to ensure local capacities were relevant and could respond to needs. It must also adapt to new developments, new needs and new situations. “We should not provide yesterday’s answers to tomorrow’s problems,” he said.

Dr Al-Hadid believed the 30th conference would provide the necessary impetus and a “better global understanding of what

we mean by our auxiliary role providing us with a universal framework for our specificity, upon which we can build our national plans and strategies.”

The Tsunami had showed the need for new mechanisms. The development of international disaster response law by the Federation and guidelines for improved disaster response to be tabled at the 30th conference are a significant step forward.

International humanitarian law remains at the core of the issues to be discussed at the 30th conference, he said, as it has been for 140 years. But here too there are new challenges because of the changing nature of war. “New phenomena are involved and it is more urgent than ever before to reaffirm forcefully the basic rules of IHL,” he continued.

“I see and feel unease and concern that thousands and thousands of youngsters are growing up into a generation of conflict....people who wish to further extremist agendas plant fear and hatred into young minds, with fearful results. Furthermore, I see signs of increased racial tensions, if not hatred, in countries where such open intolerance has neither been accepted nor tolerated before.”

Faced with these challenges the “Red Cross Red Crescent Movement is the only neutral global actor,” he asserted. He believed a special forum might be created to address these trends.

In closing, he quoted Winston Churchill, “the empires of the future are the empires of the mind.” The first day of the future, said Dr Al-Hadid, is today. ■

President Kellenberger elected chairman of the Council



The president of the ICRC, **Dr Jacob Kellenberger** was elected as chair of the Council, joined by the president of the Afghanistan Red Crescent, **Ms Fatima Gaillani**, as vice-chair. ■

Dr Al-Hadid then formally opened the Council of Delegates which quickly elected their chair, vice-chair and secretaries before adopting the provisional agenda for the next two days.

Report from the Standing Commission

Having taken the chair, Dr Kellenberger promptly handed the floor back to the chairman of the Standing Commission, Dr Al-Hadid, who updated delegates on the work of the commission since Seoul, 2005.

The Standing Commission, said Dr Al-Hadid, is the only Movement body with all components represented on a permanent basis. This representative nature means it is ideally placed to promote internal harmony and coordination; to encourage implementation of resolutions of the International Conference, and to examine matters of concern for the Movement as a whole.

Perhaps its most significant task over the past two years had been facilitating a 'comprehensive and lasting solution to the question of the emblems'.

Following the adoption of the Third Additional Protocol to the Geneva Conventions at the Diplomatic Conference in December 2005, the Standing Commission convened the 29th International Conference for June 2006 in order to change the Movement's statutes to recognize the new emblem and to establish a name for it – the red crystal.

Dr Al-Hadid reminded delegates that "importantly, the Movement came out of the conference united." Evidence of this, he said, could be found in the fact that "the two new members, the Palestinian Red Crescent and Magen David Adom were unanimously admitted to the International Federation" at the session of the General Assembly held immediately after the Conference. ■

**STANDING
COMMISSION**
OF THE RED CROSS AND RED CRESCENT



"Only limited progress" on the Memorandum of Understanding

Pär Stenbäck, the independent monitor of the Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) signed by Magen David Adom (MDA) and the Palestine Red Crescent Society (PRCS) in 2005 then gave a progress report to the Council.

He has made frequent visits to the region and found the spirit was good between the PRCS and the MDA. The PRCS also had confidence in MDA's approaches to its

own government urging full implementation the MoU. In his own contacts with the Israeli government Mr Stenbäck found that preparations had been made for fuller implementation but there had been little action.

Pär Stenbäck believed the PRCS should be regarded as a bona fide organization by the Israeli authorities, in particular in the deployment of ambulances. The MDA and PRCS have worked

hard to get five PRCS ambulances operational in Jerusalem, but they have been blocked and still remain idle.

Progress on the issue of PRCS ambulances passing through check points is mixed, Mr Stenbäck reported. Some improvements have been made, but movement of ambulances as envisaged in the MoU remains a problem. Delays to ambulances had resulted in some "tragic cases including loss of life".

There had also been little progress on the deployment of 20 ambulances and 90 staff to transport patients between the West Bank and East Jerusalem, which is supported

by both the MDA and the PRCS. In the occupied territories MDA is reducing its presence and this had been agreed between the two societies despite political obstacles. Movement of patients across the Allenby Bridge to medical facilities in Jordan had seen improvement.

Mr Stenbäck also reported that there had been incidents of emblem abuse. This was being addressed and new regulations were expected from the Palestinian Authority.

Mr Stenbäck summed up by saying that “only limited progress could be recorded in the implementation of the MoU”. He suggested the PRCS and the MDA look anew at their efforts and develop new cooperation models in 2008. Finally he urged the Israeli government to act urgently on the issue of the five PRCS ambulances for Jerusalem.

In his response to the debate, in which a dozen National Societies took the floor, Pär Stenbäck called on all National Societies to support the PRCS and MDA with a show of solidarity. He also suggested the Council look at ways of strengthening the monitoring process.

Since a draft resolution had been submitted by the group of Arab Red Crescent and Red Cross Societies, the chairman of the Council, Dr Jakob Kellenberger, proposed the creation of a small group to work on the issue and report back to him. The Council agreed. The group is comprised of the National Societies of Canada, Egypt, Qatar and Norway together with the International Federation and the ICRC. ■

Auxiliary role: “At the heart of the Movement”

The Council of Delegates adopted by consensus a resolution clarifying the unique and specific role of National Societies as auxiliaries to the public authorities in the humanitarian field.

“The auxiliary role of National Societies lies at the heart of the Movement,” vice-president of the International Federation Tadateru Konoe recalled in his introductory address on the subject. It is one of the key characteristics that distinguish National Societies from other non-governmental organizations, he said.

Mr. Konoe said that National Societies, while fulfilling their auxiliary role, must at all times safeguard their neutrality and independence, in conformity with the Fundamental Principles and the Movement’s statutes.

The need for the Movement to promote the auxiliary role domestically vis-à-vis governments, and the role of public information in educating the general public about it, were also emphasized.

Mr. Konoe concluded his address by stressing that the auxiliary role represents the essence of the “Together for humanity” theme.

The subject generated a lively and long debate with over 30 National Societies taking the floor. The debate reflected the strong interest of societies and their commitment to the auxiliary role. ■

Behind the figures: families reunited

In 2006 alone, 630,000 Red Cross Red Crescent messages were exchanged between family members separated by conflict and natural disasters throughout the world. The whereabouts of 11,500 individuals was established and over 1,000 children were reunited with their families.

“Behind every single one of these numbers, there is an individual with a life and a family,” insisted Olivier Vodoz, vice-president of the ICRC, while presenting the new Movement strategy for restoring family links (RFL) to the Council of Delegates.

The ICRC, together with its partner National Societies, has a long history of reuniting families, from late 19th century wars in Europe to the 2004 Tsunami catastrophe in South Asia, Mr Vodoz recalled.

However, he continued, the Movement must do more to meet the challenges to RFL activities from an increasingly complex environment, where international migration adds to the needs already demanded by armed conflicts and natural disasters.

Dr Ahmed Hassan, president of the Somali Red Crescent, explained how crucial restoring family links can be in a country like his, which has been affected by years of war, severe droughts, and devastating floods. “In Somalia today, despite the booming of the telecommunications industry, there remains an important space for RFL activities as many people live in isolated, rural areas with no cell phone coverage,” he added.

The new strategy is aiming at improving the capacity of the various Movement players involved in RFL activities and at enhancing coordination between them.

During the debate many National Societies gave examples of RFL in action reflecting the key role played by the Red Cross and Red Crescent in this important field of humanitarian action. ■

Henry Dunant medals awarded for outstanding humanitarian service at Council of Delegates

All photos: ICRC/Marko Kacic



Four Henry Dunant medals for outstanding humanitarian service were awarded last night. The medal is the highest distinction of the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement. It is awarded every two years to individuals to acknowledge and reward exceptional service and acts of great devotion to the Red Cross and Red Crescent cause.

The Henry Dunant medal is a red cross embossed with the profile of the Movement's founder, attached to a green ribbon. Created by the Council of Delegates in 1963, on the 100th anniversary of the birth of the Movement, it was first awarded in 1969 at the Istanbul International Conference.

The recipients are:



Hon. James Joseph Carlton, former secretary general of the Australian Red Cross and Australian Minister of Health from 1982 to 1983. He made the Australian Red Cross a strong and unified organization. Active on the international, as well as the national front, he promoted International Humanitarian Law as well as the action of the Movement. He was awarded

the medal "for his personal commitment, his important contribution to the development of humanitarian activities and for his work in promoting the Movement's Fundamental Principles and ideals". ■



Christophe Hensch, former ICRC delegate, he carried out a series of difficult missions in Afghanistan, Cambodia, Croatia, Sri Lanka, Somalia, Russia and Iran. He is a survivor of the tragic attack on the Red Cross hospital in the Chechen town of Novye Atagi, in December 1996, where six members of the staff were murdered in cold blood. After recovering

from serious injuries, and despite his ordeal, he took on new missions and contributed to the design of programmes to help victims of similar situations overcome their trauma. He receives the medal for his "devotion to humanitarian work, both before and after the Novye Atagi tragedy". ■



Alexander Dumba Ika, former head of the Congolese Red Cross tracing service in Ituri and head of the ICRC delegation in Bunia. Working in difficult circumstances, he successfully reunited hundreds of unaccompanied children with their families, and delivered family messages to remote communities. In 1998, he risked his life to protect the delegation in Bunia,

and in 1999, when conflict broke out in Ituri, he persuaded the ICRC to launch a large-scale operation which benefited tens of thousands of people. He is awarded the medal for his "commitment to humanitarian ideals, his courage and his dedication". ■



Josiane Gabel, former French Red Cross delegate in Congo and in Chad. A nurse and first aid instructor, she set up first aid training in Kwilu province, in the former Belgian Congo, in 1962 and provided vital first aid services in the dangerous rebel zones. Mrs. Gabel worked in Chad as a French Red Cross delegate, setting up a first aid unit and bush clinics. She helped

set up the Chad Red Cross and subsequently became its National First Aid Director. The tribute describes her as "a person of determination and courage, gifted with rare persuasive powers" and "fully devoted to helping the most vulnerable". ■

Josiane Gabel – speech – Henry Dunant medal



Speaking in the name of all recipients, and referring to the vision and the humanitarian ideals of the Movement's founder, Henry Dunant, Mrs. Gabel noted they all thanked the Red Cross which "taught us

so much and also asked so much of us". She said they all had the desire to pursue their humanitarian commitment for as long as they could. To conclude, she said: "A life dedicated to others finds its reward in itself, whatever the suffering and the sacrifices it has entailed, because there is no grander mission." ■

Covering War and Disaster – International Humanitarian Law and War Reporting – Does IHL Make Good News? and Safety of Media on Dangerous Assignments – What can the Red Cross Red Crescent do to Make Media Safer? Debate on Monday 26 November, 10:00 at the Centre de Conférences Varembe, across the street from the CICR. All participants to the 30th International Conference are kindly invited.

Delegates are kindly requested to empty their pigeon holes on a daily basis.

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