

# CONCEPT NOTE

FOR DONOR SUPPORT GROUP ONLY  
REM 2023/475

## The ICRC Donor Support Group (DSG)

The ICRC Donor Support Group (DSG) is a unique and privileged collective consisting of the ICRC's top government and institutional donors. It provides a platform to exchange on key ICRC policies, priorities and programming. DSG members have unique access and insights into the ICRC's operations, including through open, transparent dialogue with representatives from headquarters and the field, which allows them to better understand the humanitarian challenges that the ICRC faces. Each DSG cycle runs from June until June of the following year and is co-chaired by the ICRC and a DSG member. The DSG cycle includes key events such as Policy Forums, Field Trips, a Governance and Oversight Meeting, and culminates in the DSG Annual Meeting hosted by the co-chair in their capital city.

### Objectives

The DSG was established at the initiative of several government representatives who attended the Wolfsberg Humanitarian Forum and the ICRC round table on preventive action in Copenhagen, Denmark in 1997. During these events, the ICRC's major donors expressed their wish to have more insight into the organization's policy and programming.

In May 1998, the Government of the Netherlands facilitated an initial meeting between the ICRC and its ten largest donors<sup>1</sup>, each represented by the respective government officials in charge of humanitarian aid. These ten donors went on to become the first members of the DSG. The May 1998 meeting covered topics such as the ICRC Appeals; the impact, cost-effectiveness and sources of income of the different types of ICRC programmes<sup>2</sup>; coordination between the ICRC and its donors; and donor requirements. Members of the DSG were interested in continuing an informal but structured dialogue with the ICRC, with a view to enhancing mutual understanding and helping the organization obtain a more coordinated form of support from its major donors. The ICRC confirmed its interest in holding consultations such as these on a regular basis, and in being fully transparent about its policies and programmes.

In 1997, 1998 and 1999, the ICRC organized the Wolfsberg Humanitarian Forum in Ermatingen, Switzerland. The primary objective of the forum was to foster an open and informal dialogue between humanitarian organizations and political actors. The forum was an opportunity for them to share their analyses of the issues and challenges encountered in managing crisis situations. The forums were held under the auspices of the ICRC and brought together some 60 high-level government representatives – typically those involved in the implementation of humanitarian aid operations – from major donor countries, as well as senior officials of intergovernmental organizations and non-governmental organizations (NGOs). This included several heads of agencies and other actors of influence. The discussions focused on topics such as threats to humanitarian activities, political and humanitarian action, and the need to protect victims of conflict. While no official conclusions were drawn from the discussions, the ICRC sent a comprehensive report to all the participants.

<sup>1</sup> Canada, Denmark, Japan, the Netherlands, Norway, Sweden, Switzerland, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland (hereafter the United Kingdom), the United States of America (hereafter the United States), and the European Commission's Directorate-General for Humanitarian Aid and Civil Protection.

<sup>2</sup> The ICRC's four programmes: protection, assistance, prevention, and cooperation.

Since then, the ICRC and the DSG have held yearly meetings where they examined, discussed and adapted their positions on a wide range of issues of mutual interest, such as:

- ▶ *Management and human resources policy*: staff recruitment; training and security in the field; the ICRC's global workforce; diversity and inclusion; and staff well-being.
- ▶ *Operational realities*: project evaluation and results-based management; cost-effectiveness and performance of programmes; project sustainability and exit strategies, including the promotion of localization; the balance between ICRC's assistance and protection activities; the ICRC's role and mandate in protracted crises and its work towards sustainable humanitarian impact (SHI); the impact of digital transformation on neutral, impartial and independent humanitarian action (NIIHA), and data protection and humanitarian action in cyberspace; and the scope of the ICRC's growth, mission and mandate.
- ▶ *Policy issues*: reinforcing the ICRC's NIIHA and the challenges and opportunities connected to this; ICRC involvement during periods of transition and in peace-building activities; reinforcing the relevance of international humanitarian law (IHL) and the ICRC's endeavours to prevent or address IHL violations; coordination on humanitarian assistance among components of the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement (hereafter 'the Movement') and with the United Nations (UN), NGOs and other actors.
- ▶ *Thematic issues*: the ICRC's operational approach to internally displaced persons, children and women; security-related concerns; the relationship between IHL and human rights law in armed conflict and other situations of violence; use of force and protection of civilians; the conduct of multinational corporations during armed conflict; dialogue with private military and security companies; and strengthening diversity and inclusion in ICRC policies and programming.
- ▶ *Topics related to financing and reporting*: the ICRC's financial structure for its field operations, and overall funding and financial management; the importance and added value of quality and flexible funding; diversification of funding and broadening the ICRC's donor base; assurance, risk management, reporting and auditing; and the financial situation and architecture of the ICRC.

## Criteria for membership

- ▶ In order to become a member of the DSG, the entity must be a government, a supranational organization or an international institution exclusively composed of governments.
- ▶ To qualify for membership, the donor must contribute a minimum of 10 million Swiss francs (CHF) in cash in a given Swiss calendar year.<sup>3</sup> The CHF 10 million must be a direct contribution to the ICRC and be confirmed through the annual external audit of contributions, which takes place after the financial closure of the year.
- ▶ Once the qualification has been confirmed, membership begins at the next DSG Annual Meeting, which usually takes place in June. Membership lasts a full DSG cycle, ending at the following DSG Annual Meeting.

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<sup>3</sup> See Annexes 1 and 2.

- ▶ DSG members who do not re-qualify in a given Swiss calendar year will be granted ‘special guest status’ for one additional DSG cycle. If they do not re-qualify for membership at the end of that special guest period, their membership will cease. If they do re-qualify, they return to full membership.
- ▶ If a non-DSG donor reaches the CHF 10 million threshold in disbursed contributions before 1 June of a given Swiss calendar year, they will be invited to join the DSG as a special guest for one cycle, starting at the same year’s Annual Meeting, in advance of their full membership that will begin the following year.

## Working principles and procedures

1. Each DSG cycle is co-chaired by the ICRC’s Director-General and a DSG member, represented by the appropriate Director from their capital.
2. The co-chairmanship rotates annually among the DSG members, from June to June.
3. The ICRC and DSG co-chairs work together to ensure a conducive environment for open, frank and transparent, exchanges, in order to strengthen ongoing dialogue and mutual understanding within the group.
4. The DSG cycle of events typically commences with the first Policy Forum in September/October, followed by subsequent events taking place until June the following year (see details below). The discussions and preparations between the ICRC and the incoming co-chair usually commence in the months leading up to a new DSG cycle.
5. The ICRC and DSG co-chairs identify an overarching theme for each DSG cycle. They then work together to define the specific sub-themes for the different events within a given cycle, in line with the overarching theme.
6. The co-chairs are responsible for maintaining constructive dialogue between the ICRC and DSG members, thereby helping ensure a smooth and productive DSG cycle.
7. The DSG member serving as co-chair is expected to actively participate in all DSG events throughout the cycle, through representation at a senior level alongside the ICRC’s Director General. The co-chair typically plays an active role in the two policy forums, and hosts the Annual Meeting in their capital city at the culmination of the cycle. A representative of the co-chair is expected to participate in the field trips, and is responsible for producing the mission reports from these trips.
8. The Annual Meeting typically concludes the DSG cycle and is hosted<sup>4</sup> by the DSG member co-chairing the given cycle.

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<sup>4</sup> As the host of the Annual Meeting, the co-chair provides the venue and covers all related expenses to the annual meeting (including production costs, lunches and coffee breaks, a formal welcome dinner, a cultural excursion etc.). Travel and accommodation costs are covered by the participants.

## Activities, events and privileges

- ▶ The DSG cycle of events includes:
  - **Policy Forums** (held twice per cycle, usually in September/October and again in February): The DSG Policy Forums are an opportunity for the ICRC to provide in-depth insights into the nature and evolution of its work, and to discuss with donors the challenges and opportunities in reaching its humanitarian objectives. The Policy Forums serve as a platform for DSG members to share their views and offer advice to inform operational and institutional matters. The general objective of the DSG Policy Forums is to achieve a greater level of mutual understanding between the ICRC and the DSG on different topics and to strengthen their relationship, with the ultimate aim of improving the ICRC's humanitarian response and its efforts to alleviate human suffering. Participation is typically a combination of representatives from capital level and the permanent missions of the DSG members in Geneva, with the appropriate level of seniority (noting that the ICRC is usually represented at the level of its directors).
  - **Field Trips** (usually two trips per cycle): These trips provide donors with a unique insight into the ICRC's operations in different contexts. The terms of reference, defined in advance by the co-chairs, determines the focus of each field trip. These trips typically include meetings with local authorities and representatives of governmental organizations or NGOs, and visits to communities and to ICRC offices and areas where the ICRC implements its activities. The DSG members who participate in field trips are expected to draft a mission report that summarizes their experience and observations, and provides recommendations for the ICRC to consider. These mission reports are shared with all DSG members.
  - **Governance and Oversight Meeting** (usually in May): The Governance and Oversight Meeting offers DSG members exclusive access to discussions with ICRC's experts who manage matters related to assurance and risk management, compliance, internal controls, integrity and other related areas. DSG members receive the ICRC's annual Ethics Risk and Compliance report, as well as the annual report produced by its external auditors, who present their findings at this event. This meeting is held with a view to ensuring transparency with donors on governance and oversight matters.
  - **Annual Meeting** (usually in early to mid-June): The Annual Meeting is the culminating event of the DSG cycle and is attended by high-level representatives from the capitals of DSG members. This meeting allows for open yet structured discussions between DSG members and the ICRC President, Director General and Directors. It serves as a moment for consolidation, to discuss key issues that emerged throughout the cycle, and with a forward-looking dimension.
  - In addition to the DSG cycle of events, DSG members are regularly invited to attend ad hoc briefings on specific operational or thematic issues as they arise.
  - DSG members also have exclusive access to ICRC reports, mainly through the ICRC Extranet for Donors. These reports include field updates, results of assessments and evaluations, and operational and thematic updates on issues of humanitarian concern.

## Annex 1

### DSG membership

	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	
Australia			X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	
Austria																				X	X	X	X	X	X	
Belgium						X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	
Canada	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	
Denmark	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	
European Commission	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	
Finland						X	X		X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	
France					X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	
Germany	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	
Ireland									X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	
Italy		X	X	X	X		X	X	X	X	X	X					X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	
Japan	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	
Kuwait															X	X	X	X	X		X	X	X			
Luxembourg									X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X		X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	
Netherlands	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
New Zealand																				X	X	X	X	X	X	
Norway	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Republic of Korea																									X	
Spain								X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X						X	X	X	X	X	
Sweden	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Switzerland	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
United Arab Emirates																			X		X	X	X	X	X	
United Kingdom	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
United States	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
World Bank																				X		X	X	X	X	
<b>Members</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>24</b>	

X: membership     : no membership

## Annex 2

### Cash contributions of DSG members compared to total cash contributions (in KCHF)

	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	
Australia	10,311	10,240	10,142	10,632	11,684	12,441	15,933	13,810	22,952	24,799	33,907	44,760	37,272	45,068	36,702	35,763	32,169	46,862	38,604	40,682	31,203	34,793	39,942	
Austria																		11,889	13,855	12,645	12,573	16,795	25,733	
Belgium					10,000	10,242	13,409	10,745	13,873	11,244	17,296	17,642	22,780	20,030	12,100	20,549	28,739	25,912	28,361	27,096	25,068	24,886	29,434	
Canada	20,928	22,365	22,117	31,249	17,688	19,483	28,802	35,140	31,506	38,772	32,098	28,016	46,380	36,633	46,493	57,232	57,131	65,272	63,824	53,028	55,014	66,040	75,185	
Denmark	12,783	11,500	10,181	10,062	10,033	10,407	11,108	11,266	14,579	10,548	12,657	17,119	16,327	23,193	24,087	22,680	18,401	32,844	37,359	32,887	27,697	25,946	26,284	
European Commission	41,435	44,464	40,455	79,154	77,899	90,129	84,932	111,283	129,147	116,723	111,391	105,731	89,565	88,238	126,371	123,684	160,184	166,166	160,999	147,270	122,719	128,930	150,993	
Finland				12,058	12,216		11,348	15,923	11,519	11,016	10,343	11,404	9,907	11,886	13,668	10,307	10,774	12,851	12,057	13,000	13,073	12,544	12,868	
France			10,103	12,510	17,893	13,935	14,395	14,828	15,174	17,626	15,138	13,764	14,918	17,312	18,648	20,376	17,091	19,348	24,605	35,097	34,485	45,296	57,758	
Germany	10,387	12,723	24,590	24,234	22,857	18,125	22,099	23,701	33,270	30,800	29,799	34,697	35,572	48,655	52,542	45,624	122,968	195,587	174,338	180,741	256,190	247,496	206,702	
Ireland								13,391	13,938	10,616	10,159	11,987	10,729	11,239	11,451	12,459	15,415	14,241	16,053	18,696	16,703	17,789	23,006	
Italy	10,794	13,397	12,355		10,297	10,311		11,290	18,362	10,291						11,827	15,966	16,721	19,603	15,442	21,021	12,376	27,082	
Japan	11,956	18,439	22,635	18,808	10,519	13,592	16,477	10,277	15,547	30,207	38,229	46,853	42,771	50,587	33,858	30,839	51,596	41,166	25,214	25,978	25,953	51,020	51,382	
Kuwait														24,046	20,551	21,719	10,077	6,869	35,528	16,776	2,932			
Luxembourg							10,122	13,090	11,368	10,494	10,967	10,000	9,978	10,013			10,036	10,227	12,387	10,595	12,368	14,082	18,177	
Netherlands	48,763	55,259	46,529	47,700	43,888	64,809	61,948	72,636	65,971	42,378	37,090	35,571	30,112	31,010	47,686	56,832	53,410	52,037	55,039	51,693	58,663	46,239	51,694	
New Zealand																			10,305	10,285	10,386	5,626	10,199	5,573
Norway	20,946	25,824	25,907	27,618	26,436	31,623	38,072	37,759	42,236	46,133	49,223	60,396	62,081	63,936	59,348	45,119	71,142	70,168	69,084	73,541	63,141	86,850	86,815	
Republic of Korea																							10,459	
Spain							14,706	14,254	22,509	23,314	20,524	19,124	10,888						10,325	10,042	11,409	12,219	17,298	
Sweden	40,023	36,526	37,909	36,504	42,531	49,278	54,556	78,897	79,144	69,565	67,408	83,712	68,681	69,831	73,154	55,137	74,287	67,145	74,828	71,348	87,604	93,233	97,326	
Switzerland	99,603	84,920	88,734	90,655	92,041	92,647	97,012	96,929	102,500	105,743	110,028	112,025	110,384	119,803	140,068	160,368	145,837	150,171	148,038	155,293	155,397	156,071	160,310	
UAE																	9,877	77	10,656	11,065	96	6,304	11,222	
United Kingdom	84,107	106,136	118,685	113,685	83,668	99,343	97,868	106,531	139,061	91,598	77,918	152,513	74,998	163,249	171,332	208,034	224,187	212,962	205,611	211,803	208,673	153,105	159,378	
United States	209,480	224,827	196,378	221,142	163,200	206,988	209,618	205,122	237,854	282,412	261,783	241,131	207,897	260,075	313,365	417,600	407,162	406,913	461,901	478,917	491,187	543,636	609,542	
World Bank																			19,801		15,960	8,617 <sup>5</sup>	9,178	4,187
Total cash contributions received from the DSG	621,515	666,621	666,720	736,012	652,852	743,354	802,403	896,873	1,020,510	984,279	945,957	1,046,447	901,240	1,094,804	1,201,425	1,356,148	1,536,448	1,655,533	1,708,554	1,719,479	1,747,411	1,815,027	1,958,350	
Total cash contributions received from all donors	776,278	776,278	749,187	852,000	734,548	914,179	911,066	985,505	1,114,439	1,067,869	1,036,681	1,138,826	994,957	1,202,063	1,327,492	1,484,244	1,644,182	1,780,757	1,807,641	1,808,228	1,854,678	1,944,646	2,431,244	
% of DSG contributions against total	80.06%	85.87%	88.99%	86.39%	88.88%	81.31%	88.07%	91.01%	91.57%	92.17%	91.25%	91.89%	90.58%	91.08%	90.50%	91.37%	93.45%	92.97%	94.52%	95.09%	94.22%	93.33%	80.55%	

<sup>5</sup> This figure is the net result following an adjustment to the World Bank's 2019 contribution. The World Bank's 2020 contribution prior to this adjustment reached CHF 10 million.

## Annex 3

## DSG events

Year	Annual Meeting host and location	Policy forums	Field trips
2024	Spain (Madrid, date TBC)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Access to and protection of health care in armed conflict</li> </ul>	TBC
2023	Japan (Tokyo, June)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Overcoming fragility and compounded crises (October 2022)</li> <li>Overcoming fragility and compounded crises part 2: Growth, mission and mandate (February 2023).</li> </ul>	Sudan The Philippines
2022	Luxembourg (Luxembourg City, May/June)	<p>Preserving and strengthening neutral, impartial and independent humanitarian space in fragile contexts and protracted crises.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Humanitarian action and challenges to ICRC's role in protracted crises (September 2021)</li> <li>NIHHA and the digital transformation of humanitarian action (January 2022)</li> </ul>	Nigeria
2021	Norway (online, June)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Flexible funding and beyond (January 2021)</li> <li>Protection: Present and future challenges and opportunities (October 2020)</li> </ul>	Field trips replaced by the online 'Engagement with the Field' event in June 2021.
2020	Ireland (online, June)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>A gender-sensitive approach to humanitarian action (January 2020)</li> <li>Delivering sustainable humanitarian impact (November 2019)</li> </ul>	South Sudan Israel and the Occupied Territories (cancelled)
2019	European Commission - ECHO, Belgium (Brussels, June)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Embracing the digital transformation (October 2018)</li> <li>Counterterrorism and humanitarian action (January 2019)</li> </ul>	Ukraine Iraq
2018	Canada (Ottawa, May)	<p>ICRC New Strategy: Reflecting together</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>DSG Consultations - Part I (October 2017)</li> <li>DSG Consultations - Part II (January 2018)</li> </ul>	Colombia Democratic Republic of the Congo
2017	Germany (Bonn, June)	<p>Protracted as the new norm</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Displacement and migration: adapting the approach (October 2016)</li> <li>Humanitarian financing (January 2017)</li> </ul>	Niger and Mali Lebanon
2016	Switzerland (Bern, June)	<p>Proximity to the affected population</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Contributing to a more significant Movement response to large-scale emergencies (October 2015)</li> <li>Strengthening the ICRC's capacity to protect through law, operations and policy (February 2016)</li> </ul>	Afghanistan Central African Republic

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<b>2015</b>	Belgium (Brussels, May)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Health Care in Danger and Sexual Violence (October 2014)</li> <li>• Sexual violence in armed conflicts (March 2015)</li> </ul>	Myanmar South Sudan
<b>2014</b>	Netherlands (The Hague, May)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The ICRC's Institutional Strategy 2015–2018 (October 2013)</li> <li>• Resource mobilization (March 2014)</li> </ul>	Lebanon Mexico City (regional): El Salvador, Honduras, Mexico
<b>2013</b>	Denmark (Copenhagen, May)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Result-Based Management and other related elements such as programme performance, cost-effectiveness, and monitoring and evaluation (October 2012)</li> <li>• Strategic and operational choices that take into consideration the key success indicators of access, reputation, acceptance and relevance, as seen in Iraq (March 2013)</li> </ul>	Israel and the Occupied Territories; Cancelled: Iraq Abidjan (regional)
<b>2012</b>	Japan (Tokyo, May)		Democratic Republic of the Congo Philippines
<b>2011</b>	Luxembourg (Luxembourg City, May)		Dakar (regional): Guinea-Bissau, Senegal Afghanistan and Pakistan
<b>2010</b>	Norway (Oslo, May)		Central African Republic Cancelled: Afghanistan and Pakistan
<b>2009</b>	Spain (Madrid, May)		Chad Colombia
<b>2008</b>	France (Paris, May)		Democratic Republic of the Congo Sri Lanka
<b>2007</b>	Sweden (Stockholm, May)		Israel and the Occupied Territories Uganda
<b>2006</b>	Switzerland (Bern, June)		Nepal Sudan
<b>2005</b>	Canada (Toronto, June)		Colombia Liberia
<b>2004</b>	Australia (Brisbane, June)		Sudan Suva (regional)
<b>2003</b>	European Commission - ECHO, Belgium (Brussels, June)		Democratic Republic of the Congo Israel and the Occupied Territories
<b>2002</b>	United Kingdom (London, June)		Ethiopia Myanmar
<b>2001</b>	Germany (Berlin, June)		Angola Sri Lanka
<b>2000</b>	Norway (Geneva, Switzerland, May)		
<b>1999</b>	United States (Geneva, Switzerland, April)		Colombia Georgia
<b>1998</b>	Sweden (Stockholm, November)		
<b>1998</b>	Netherlands (The Hague, May)		