

Henry Dunant Medal

Tribute to

Pär Stenbäck

Pär Stenbäck entered the Finnish Red Cross as secretary general in 1985 with solid experience in development, education and foreign affairs. His impressive work with the National Society carried him to Geneva as secretary general of the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies in 1988, as the Cold War was drawing to a close. On the new geopolitical scene, Mr Stenbäck succeeded in expanding the geographical reach of the Federation's activities.

Throughout his years in the Movement, Mr Stenbäck impressed his fellow Red Cross and Red Crescent colleagues by his courage in taking on new challenges. He was inclusive and open in his approach, and encouraged those around him to offer comments and criticism. His down-to-earth manner was among the many reasons that he was highly appreciated by his colleagues. During his tenure as secretary general, the Federation went through a difficult period. With determination and vision, Mr Stenbäck reshaped the organization, developing new instruments and approaches. The Strategic Workplan for the Nineties, which provided a basis for strategic thinking and guidance within the Federation and brought the notion of vulnerability into focus within the Movement, was especially noteworthy. Mr Stenbäck also prepared the way for permanent regional delegations within the Federation in order to provide better support to the National Societies.

As a political scientist and as a long-serving member of parliament and government minister who held several portfolios, Mr Stenbäck is extraordinarily well-placed to use knowledge of politics and skills in humanitarian work to improve the lives of vulnerable people. He is filled with determination and unafraid of difficulty. His vision and stern commitment to humanitarian values enabled him to develop innovative solutions to seemingly intractable problems, and to achieve concrete results which have enhanced the role and significance of the Movement's humanitarian work. Mr Stenbäck laid the basis for the Federation's refugee work and strengthened cooperation with UNHCR.

After leaving the Federation, Mr Stenbäck returned to the Finnish Red Cross and shortly thereafter was elected its president. His international experience helped further transform his Home Society into an even more engaged and flourishing member of the Movement nationally and internationally. Highly solicited because of his commitment to humanitarian goals and his professional record, Mr Stenbäck has continued to contribute actively to humanitarian work within the private sector and the Red Cross/Red Crescent. His service on the executive committee of the International Crisis Group has widened the scope of his activities and provided him with new opportunities to exert his influence.

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, the Standing Commission of the Red Cross and Red Crescent has unanimously agreed to award Mr Pär Stenbäck the Henry Dunant Medal, the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement's highest distinction.

Geneva, 23 November 2009

H.E. Dr Mohammed Al-Hadid
Chairman

Standing Commission of the Red Cross and Red Crescent