

9th MENA conference

24-26 January, 2017

Statement by

Ms Eva von Oelreich

Chair of the Standing Commission of the Red Cross and Red Crescent

Amman, 24 January, 2017

Your Excellency, Speaker of the Senate,

Mr Chair,

Dear Dr Mohammed,

Dear Sisters and Brothers in Middle East and North African Red Crescent and Red Cross Societies,

Dear Colleagues and Friends, from all over the world,

It's an honour to address you. I look out on decision-makers and operators in a tormented region, where your humanitarian action is the only hope for many most vulnerable, where heroic, important humanitarian action by National Societies takes place relentlessly, and with horrendous sacrifice in that humanitarian volunteers and staff die in action, where limitations to what can be achieved is a blow in the face each day, where access is denied and many more need our humanitarian support in the vacuum of political solutions in spite of all important humanitarian action being carried out within our Red Crescent and Red Cross Movement, first and foremost by National Societies in the region – as well as supported by NS beyond the region and our International Federation, and by the ICRC. In the end, it's about all of us and how well our interaction works to make the most of the Movement contribution to "alleviating human suffering".

In spite of all that is done, it is with desperation that I think of how far we are from answering the overwhelming needs here and in other parts of the globe. How can we do all that is possible, when the task is so huge?

I believe it's important to first acknowledge and be proud of what is being done, and give credit to all who contribute to that. Secondly, never give up the understanding that we can always do more, always do better, always reach further. Each morning we must sharpen our tools to achieve more.

This MENA conference, as said in the invitation message, "meets the needs of the MENA region and the main aspirations of the humanitarian Movement". This MENA conference is important in its own right. It is *also* more than that. It will feed into the next *Movement* meeting, the Council of Delegates, in November in Turkey. Some of your *discussions* here may become Movement *decisions* there. Some of our wishes for change can become decisions for change there. The Council of Delegates is valuable, since we take decisions for all our Movement. That being said, it's only when we *implement* the decisions that change happens.

I congratulate all who are here in the MENA conference "to sharpen our humanitarian tools", to always, always improve our action by analyzing and discussing what needs to be done, what needs to change. The world may be at a stalemate when it comes to certain crucial political decisions. Politics is not our realm, but we can do ever so much to be relevant in humanitarian action, be transparent, have integrity and quality in what we do. Even with many political barriers, there is room to work with excellence and to interact well with each other to achieve more.

To that end, we in the Standing Commission have created an additional tool in our toolbox of meetings. We know that we need to, always, increase our understanding of the world around us, especially the humanitarian world, we need to analyze future trends and their consequences for our Movement. So think tank mode is one of our new working methods.

We will therefore also invite all National Societies to discuss future trends in the light of our Movement a full day, the day before the Council of Delegates in November. Those discussions will also be needed for the next Federation strategy. You recently received concept notes for the statutory meetings that we want you to influence.

Take the opportunity to get your voices heard about your burning issues for our Movement.

All voices must be heard. Crescents and Crosses, volunteers and governance, experts and generalists, young and old, women and men, in all our work. I am sometimes reminded of that. Not rarely, a woman – and sometimes a man – tell me they are so pleased to see a woman chair the Standing Commission. I have to give you this feedback. Because it doesn't have to be something to comment on. We can change it. We can make it so common to have women leadership that it does not need to be commented on.

And I want to bring in another category: youth, young women and young men. We can have many young women and many young men in our meetings, in our Councils of Delegates and other meetings.

You can start by sending delegations to the Council of Delegates with women and men, also young women and young men. We can change all we want to change to be that global, wonderful humanitarian network that we all need, modern, action-oriented, wise, inspirational, innovative, relevant.

But we need all voices to be there.

Change always starts today, this day with the MENA conference that seems so inspiring from the programme. I wish you all the best for discussions and I will have big ears throughout to listen carefully.

And now a quote:

"I dream of a Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement that has global moral authority and can call the attention of the world to humanitarian issues of concern, a Movement, which independently chooses which issues to focus on."

I quote Henry Dunant, a dream still to remember, a dream for each generation to put into action.

A stimulating and strong conference I wish us all! Because we have serious humanitarian work to carry out and we must sharpen our tools!

Thank you for your attention!