

**Remarks at the 42nd meeting of the Governing Board
International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies**

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Mr President, Mr Secretary-General, dear colleagues and friends, buenas tardes from Madrid, good afternoon, bonjour, masa' alkhayr. As I said last July, I will take the opportunity of speaking in my own language, so, I will continue now in Spanish.

I would like to thank the President, and my friend, Francesco, again for giving me the opportunity to speak to the IFRC's Governing Board at its 42nd meeting.

I hope that you and all your families and colleagues are safe and well and all in good health. I would not like to continue without giving a special mention to the thousands of volunteers and staff members who have been working hard, and are still working hard, in the fight against coronavirus, on top of the daily challenges that they face.

In the name of the Standing Commission, and with all my heart, I join in the virtual applause and I would like to suggest that our next statutory meetings would be an opportunity for both the General Assembly and the Council of Delegates to pay tribute together to all of them for their hard work.

Almost a year has passed since the last statutory meetings in 2019 and the election of the new Standing Commission. I think I can safely say that we have made progress, despite the difficulties we've encountered as a consequence of the COVID-19 pandemic.

The issues arising from not being able to meet, discuss and exchange ideas in person have been both a constraint and an opportunity to find new ways of working together. We have had to be creative, but these past months have been productive.

In addition to the formal meetings of the Commission, we have held three workshops:

- one to deal with issues regarding our internal processes, such as the Rules of Procedure;
- a second on issues relevant to the Movement, such as reforming Movement awards (the Henry Dunant Medal and the Red Cross and Red Crescent Prize for Peace and Humanity);
- a third on statutory meetings, in particular the 2021 Council of Delegates.

A few days ago, I had the pleasure of taking part in a meeting of the Governing Board's Working Group on the Statutory Meetings, chaired by Brigitta Gadiant, which was a good opportunity to debate the issues surrounding these important Movement meetings with some of you.

Since last March, the Standing Commission has considered the lessons learned from and the outcome of the 2019 Council of Delegates and International Conference and has been drafting a four-year strategy to prepare the next statutory meetings, including the 2023 International Conference and, in particular, the next Council of Delegates, tentatively scheduled for December 2021 in the Dominican Republic.

For the Council of Delegates, we are working on a concept note, which should soon be approved by the Standing Commission and will be sent to all the National Societies for consultation.

The Council of Delegates is being organized, as usual, in collaboration with the IFRC's General Assembly.

As I said to President Rocca recently, I would like the Council of Delegates and the General Assembly to be the most complementary and coherent possible in terms of organization and of formulating policies, which are the responsibility of both the Governing Board and the Standing Commission, so that the Movement may fulfil its ambition of speaking with one coherent voice, that of the so-called "Red Pillar".

Taking into account the interest in complementarity, we know that the General Assembly has specific issues to deal with, such as the election next year of the Governing Board.

Given the current situation, we are aware that the organization of the General Assembly and the 2021 Council of Delegates cannot be "as usual", among other things due to the many threats and uncertainties that COVID-19 will continue presenting for all international, national (and even family) meetings in the coming months, as well as the long time it will take for international transport to recover.

Likewise, in the organization of any future meeting of the Movement, we must consider the Red Cross and Red Crescent's commitment to combating climate change, doing our bit to reduce our own carbon footprint and recognizing that virtual meetings, even though they may at times be complicated, have allowed us to continue working on behalf of the people we serve.

I believe it is not possible to do everything virtually and we know that face to face meetings are better for enhancing relationships, but we need to look at striking a different balance in our next meetings.

We are at a key moment, in that both the Governing Board and the Standing Commission have to take an important decision on the next cycle of statutory meetings. So, allow me to ask three questions that **all of us** need to think about:

1. Is it possible to hold the meetings on the dates and in the places proposed?
2. What difference would it make to us if, in light of the pandemic, we had to postpone statutory meetings for a few months?

3. Whatever the place and the dates agreed, are we prepared to hold the meetings in virtual format, either totally or in part?

I leave these questions on the table and encourage you to consider them at this meeting. In any case, we should have a decision on how and where to have our 2021 meetings no later than the first quarter of next year.

Regarding other matters of the substantial issues, I am aware of the progress achieved, though it was not as much as we would have liked, partly due to the current difficult situation.

I would like to emphasize again the importance of integrity for the Movement as a whole. The integrity cases that arise affect all members. The credibility and reputation of each individual affects us all, and any shortcomings undermine trust, both inside and outside the Red Cross and Red Crescent.

On the Standing Commission, we value the Governing Board and Secretariat's efforts to strengthen the Movement's integrity.

We look forward to the start of the joint process between National Societies, the ICRC and the International Federation on the Seville Agreement and Supplementary Measures, to which we on the Standing Commission shall add our own efforts to improve the collective humanitarian impact of the Red Cross and Red Crescent.

Allow me to remind you of the Standing Commission's mandate and commitment to provide follow-up and ensure that all the previously approved resolutions are being properly promoted and applied.

I hope we shall have other opportunities for discussion between the members of the Standing Commission and the Governing Board on issues of common interest. I remain, at your disposal for any questions you may have on the Standing Commission's work.

Thank you for your attention. I wish you fruitful discussions this week.

Finally, I hope you stay healthy. Take care of yourselves!

Thank you.