

**Bangladesh Red Crescent Society
Partnership Meeting
Dhaka 5 – 6 February 2017**

**Address
by
Dr Massimo Barra
Member of the Standing Commission of the Red Cross and Red Crescent**

Excellency,
Chair,
Colleagues of the Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement,
Dear Friends,

It is an honour for me to be with you today. With friends and colleagues from the Red Cross and Red Crescent, coming from across the world. Friends from other organisations and places, united in our wish to support Bangladesh Red Crescent Society's continuing efforts to come to the aid of the most vulnerable of this country.

And it is to the Bangladesh Red Crescent we must look to lead this work: throughout its history, this National Society has proven its value to local communities, local people, local partners and - through that - to the Movement.

Time and time again Bangladesh Red Crescent's indispensable assistance to victims of numerous floods, cyclones and other disasters; refugees and migrants, and individuals who face hardship.

Bangladesh Red Crescent has supported local communities in disaster prevention, risk reduction, and in building resilience.

The dedication of its volunteers, staff members, and leadership is impressive – and clearly visible in the results.

It is not for nothing that the Henry Dunant Medal was awarded to a member of the Bangladesh Red Crescent – Mrs Monowara Sarkar.

Mrs Sarkar set a vivid example in her unceasing efforts to help restore family links. She was awarded the Movement's highest distinction because of her innovative approaches. In a world marked by unpredictability and instability, we can be inspired by Mrs Sarkar's ground-breaking spirit to better meet the increasing humanitarian needs.

And that spirit will be needed, more than ever, in the coming years. It will require not only originality and hard work, close listening to our peoples, and clear thinking – it will need a clear vision of what we are and what we can become – as individual National Societies as well a Movement.

Our work will be done in a more and more challenging environment, causing increased demands for assistance, support - and Humanity. That Principle is about more than kindness, it is a call to action on many different levels of human life:

“ ... prevent and alleviate human suffering wherever it may be found. Its purpose is to protect life and health and to ensure respect for the human being. It promotes mutual understanding, friendship, cooperation and lasting peace amongst all peoples”.

It is this that we in the Standing Commission wanted to support when we proposed, last year, to the Council of Delegates a *Vision for the Movement*. In this document, we tried to provide all

components – 190 National Societies, the ICRC and the International Federation – with a brief description of whom we think we are, and what we aspire to be in the future.

This Vision for the Movement offers a framework for strategic reflections in the rapidly changing environment we live daily. We know well that the world is varied and experiences diverse, we do not believe that one set of ideas is valid in all circumstances. But we do believe, strongly, in the Unity of the Movement, and in its Universalist approach – common Principles; shared values; and strong solidarity.

The Vision Paper's distinct point is its focus on the Movement as a whole. It aims to enable the components to find convergence – philosophically and practically. Guided by the Fundamental Principles and inspired by innovative approaches, the Movement is stronger than the sum of its parts.

We encourage all components of the Movement to study the Vision Paper and reflect on the guidance laid out in it. It will be a worthwhile exercise before developing your own Society's next strategic document. That, we hope, will enhance the Movement's coherence and help it reach farther, do more.

To meet our challenges, we need to see them and acknowledge them. That is what the Commission, recently, held an informal brainstorming session focussed on future trends affecting the Movement's work. Such discussions help narrow down the issues for us to discuss at the Red Cross Red Crescent Forum and at the Council of Delegates in November this year, where the point of departure for discussions is 'Future trends affecting People and Humanitarian Action'.

I invite you to read the concept notes of the Council of Delegates and the RC / RC Forum. These concept notes were sent to you about a week ago, and you can access them on the RCRC conference website. Remember, it is Your Council – your comments and suggestions are important to make it an interesting and meaningful event.

Our Movement's ideals are the driving force for us to go the extra mile in coming to the aid of the vulnerable, to alleviate human suffering. Our effective cooperation with internal and external partners plays an important part in helping us to make that extra mile.

We all read newspapers and watch television, and some of what we see happening across the world is intimidating: increasing fragmentation, focus on nation and people, erection of barriers among human beings, the ringing of alarm bells can be heard everywhere.

That is when I believe it is good to remember another source of inspiration and guidance, this time taken from a document far too few people take the trouble to read: the Statutes of the Movement. In there, you will find, is set out an approach that is worth studying:

“ ... by its humanitarian work and the dissemination of its ideals, the Movement promotes a lasting peace, which is not simply the absence of war, but is a dynamic process of cooperation among all States and peoples, cooperation founded on respect for freedom, independence, national sovereignty, equality, human rights, as well as on a fair and equitable distribution of resources to meet the needs of peoples.

If that is our aspiration, let our work begin!

Thank you!