
Remarks at the opening of the 10th European Regional Conference

Mr George Weber

Standing Commission of the Red Cross and Red Crescent

Almaty, 2 May 2018

Mister Akim of Almaty city, Mister Baourjan Baïbek,

Dear leaders of the National Societies from Europe and Central Asia and of the IFRC,
Distinguished observers and guests from the International Federation, the Movement
and other organizations,

Good morning, Bonjour, Buenos días, dobroye utro, Qayırlı tañ!

Thank you for giving the Standing Commission of the Red Cross and Red Crescent the opportunity to address this important 10th European Regional Conference of the Red Cross and Red Crescent.

I take this opportunity to warmly congratulate the organizers of this conference, especially our host, the Kazakh Red Crescent and its President Dr. Yerkebek Argymbaev.

The inspiring speeches that we just heard all exhorted us, in one way or another, to rise to face the increasing challenges in this rapidly changing humanitarian landscape. I observe that many issues proposed on your agenda stem from decisions we made as a Movement in previous statutory meetings, coupled with the new challenges we face as a global humanitarian network.

Our last Council of Delegates in Antalya has already marked the **half-way point of the working cycle which will take us to the 33rd International Conference and the Council of Delegate of 2019** in Geneva. **The International Conference is your Conference** and issues and ambitions to be addressed in the privileged dialogue that our Movement has with the States must be determined. The next 18 months will pass very quickly! And again we have here a great **opportunity to demonstrate the Movement's ability to shape the humanitarian agenda**, and to raise its collective voice on pressing humanitarian concerns to ensure we have a positive and concrete impact on the lives of people we serve.

Among the decisions taken in Antalya, the Standing Commission heard loud and clear the important resolutions adopted by the General Assembly and the Council of Delegates for **strengthening gender equality and equal opportunities in the**

leadership and work of the Movement. The Commission has already started to act on its responsibility in this collective endeavor.

Here in Almaty, I will be particularly attentive to your debates in order to **hear the voice of the National Societies**. The Standing Commission welcomes the opportunity to better grasp your ideas, issues, concerns and proposals on essential challenges of today and tomorrow. I also look forward to the fifth session on Friday that should wrap-up on highlights of your discussions which would be most relevant for the 2019 statutory meetings. Further opportunities for exchanges and consultations with National Societies and governments will be forthcoming in the coming months to develop the agenda of the International Conference and the Council of Delegates. I strongly encourage you to actively take part in it. And of course, we at the Standing Commission welcome anytime your ideas and comments to make statutory meetings more meaningful, impactful and relevant.

Since 2015, the Standing Commission has reaffirmed its think tank role to examine matters of concern to all the components from a Movement perspective. The Commission has prioritized internal deliberations on the **key issue of resilient and effective governance, with special emphasis on integrity and compliance**. The aim is not to substitute the great work that is being done by the Federation's Compliance and Mediation Commission (CMC) which should be supported and reinforced even further. We all know that exposing the failure of one component and even of individuals can potentially discredit the **collective reputation of other components, if not the entire Movement**, especially in the context of international operations. Whether we like it or not, the pervasive social media makes us all subject to the 'governance of the street', justly or unfairly.

Many standards and rules exist in our Fundamental Principles, Statutes and policies. But do we all agree on which of them define our integrity, what gaps should be most urgently addressed and how do institutions and individuals of our Movement more effectively comply with them? It is time to look at these issues in a more holistic way, from the global level to the grass-root level of staff and volunteers directly in touch with the most vulnerable in local branches. Beyond the **issues of fraud, corruption and sextortion that can severely undermine trust** in humanitarian action and institutions, the breaches of the rules of international coordination within the Movement also raise specific and serious questions about the cohesion of the Movement.

This conference rightly features key issues such as 'building resilience', sustaining localized capacity, improving accountability and transparency, enhancing regional coordination and cooperation within the Movement and, most importantly, upholding a principled and neutral humanitarian action for vulnerable migrants. **Strengthening**

resilient and effective governance, integrity and compliance may give us an angle to address such important issues and the Standing Commission will be continuing its reflection in this area where it adds value.

Dear colleagues, I wish you every success in the conduct of your work during the next days of the Conference here in Almaty. Good luck! Bonne chance! ¡Buena suerte!