

**Address to the 11th European Regional Conference
Tbilisi, Georgia, 26-28 April 2022**

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Chair

Standing Commission of the Red Cross and Red Crescent

26 April 2022

Dear President of the **Georgia Red Cross**,
Dear President of the **International Federation**,
Dear Vice- President of the **ICRC**

Dear leaders of the **Red Cross Red Crescent National Societies**,
Distinguished observers and guests

Dear colleagues, **Dila mshvidobisa**, Good morning, Bonjour, Buenos días, Dobry Utra.

Thank you, Madame President, for offering me the opportunity to address the **11th European Regional Conference** on relevant issues for the Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement. Let me first congratulate you on holding this meeting here in Tbilisi.

It is very nice to see you all here again in-person! I also greet those of you, following this meeting online.

I would not like to begin my address without first remembering the millions of people who are suffering the consequences of the conflict in Ukraine, and in several other protracted conflicts and crisis in many other corners of the world.

This Regional Conference is taking place in a context that would have been difficult to imagine a few weeks ago, when many of the National Societies represented in this room had to mobilize all your forces to address the terrible suffering of millions of people directly affected by the conflict.

Just when we thought we were witnessing the first signs of a return to normalcy in the COVID-19 pandemic, although it remains a matter of serious concern in many regions, the outbreak of the conflict in Ukraine threatens peace in this region, and hence in the world. It is generating terrible humanitarian suffering for people affected, both in Ukraine and in neighbouring countries.

Today, I would especially like to express the Standing Commission's admiration and support for the volunteers and staff of the Ukrainian Red Cross, the International Federation and the ICRC, and for the work of the National Societies of the neighbouring countries:

- Belarus RC,
- Hungarian RC,
- RC of Moldova,
- Polish RC,
- Romanian RC,

- Russian RC and
- Slovak RC,

for the immense effort you are making to provide an effective, neutral and impartial humanitarian response to this crisis.

I know that the dramatic humanitarian consequences of this situation will be the focus of many discussions over the next three days.

We are living in sad and complicated times at the international level, a new dark period for humanity.

It is one of those moment, when the world is living in uncertain times, when the Movement should act as one and to show ourselves as a **united Movement fit for purpose**, capable of fulfilling its mission and effectively and efficiently addressing the growing humanitarian needs.

Unity, solidarity and trust within the Movement are critical today in the face of new threats to our humanitarian work.

As it was recently the case, when one of the components was targeted by **deliberate cyber-attacks** or by **misinformation and disinformation campaigns**, the whole Movement is affected, in our reputation, in our ability to engage with all parties and to reach out to vulnerable people.

The Red Cross and Red Crescent is seen as one, without any distinction. We are all the **Red Pillar**, that we keep talking about.

We are strong and in the face of such attacks, individually and collectively, we should **be brave and speak with truth, conviction and consistency to defend and reaffirm the founding principles and values of the Red Cross and Red Crescent**.

The neutral role of the Red Cross and Red Crescent, has been shameless questioned! It is essential that both at the international and local levels we continue disseminating our Fundamental Principles and IHL and what our role is. Humanitarian Diplomacy is now, more important than ever.

These same principles and values also **oblige us to advocate for those other crisis on the planet that have disastrous humanitarian consequences** and tend to vanish, when all the attention is focused on more recent or more mediatic emergencies.

We have the responsibility to ensure equity to the hundreds of millions of people in Africa, Asia and elsewhere in the world, who are plunged into many others conflicts and crisis, to those who are forced to leave their homes and countries, to embark on the precarious path of migration or those who face new and severe situations of food insecurity and drought.

Nor can we ignore the emergence of climate crisis for which we must be better prepared, even when they do not take the form of sudden outbreaks and rather result in a degradation of the livelihoods of entire communities.

Now, I would like to underline the importance of the forthcoming Council of Delegates on June 22-23, which will follow the 23rd session of the IFRC General Assembly.

The Standing Commission met 10 days ago to review and approve the provisional agenda and working documents of the Council of Delegates which will be dispatched to the Movement in the next two weeks.

I am grateful for the feedback received from National Societies which was presented to the Standing Commission and taken into account in the preparation of the new documents that will be sent out in early May.

Like for this Regional Conference, the capacity restrictions, that are still in place because of COVID 19, have forced us to limit participation and to adopt a **hybrid approach** to the statutory meetings this year. We count on everyone's understanding of these particular conditions of participation.

For those National Societies that have not yet done so, I urge you to **register your delegates to attend these meetings in person in Geneva or online**.

As you probably know, one more delegate, representing the **YOUTH**, has been approved to be added to the NS delegations, both for the IFRC General Assembly and the Council of Delegates.

The **Council of Delegates is our forum**, as components of the Movement, for discussing important issues and seeking points of synergy in the face of both external and internal challenges.

The commitment and efforts of all members of the Movement are key to building a **Movement fit for purpose**.

Let us together make the upcoming Council of Delegates, a **true Movement deliberative forum** that is relevant and valid to address issues of significance to all members and the people we serve.

Some of the issues on the agenda of the Council of Delegates are nowadays of particular relevance to the current humanitarian crisis.

I refer, for example, to the proposals on preventing and responding to the humanitarian impact of **war in cities**, the adoption of a new plan of action for the Movement regarding the **elimination of nuclear weapons**, the consolidation of **anticipatory humanitarian action** in the Movement and the development of a Movement strategy on **migration**.

And, also the **safeguarding of humanitarian data**, that was added to the agenda as a subject of paramount importance for our Movement, in the face of increasingly serious threats to humanitarian action.

In any case, we must not forget other issues, such as the **revision of the Seville Agreement and its Supplementary Measures**, with the aim of highlighting the central role of National Societies and **enhancing the collective impact of the Movement**.

With regard to this matter, the Standing Commission welcomed in 2020 the launching of the joint work process between ICRC and IFRC, and **we recalled the special responsibility of the Standing Commission** regarding the implementation and review of the Seville Agreement (according to Article 10 of that Agreement).

The Standing Commission was lately informed by the IFRC and ICRC that more time was needed to complete the ongoing drafting process and consultation with National Societies before presenting the proposal to the next June Council of Delegates.

I am confident that we will receive the Draft Resolution **in due time to be well prepared for the CoD**.

Finally, I want to share with you, that at its last meeting, the members of the Standing Commission, also had an in-depth reflection on the possible **priorities and orientations for the 34th International Conference**, scheduled for 2023.

It is important that **we prepare well in advance for this new gathering** of the Movement with all States Parties to the Geneva Conventions, and choices will have to be made among the many pressing issues to consider.

So please stand ready to contribute soon to the preparation of this unique forum for humanitarian dialogue, including previous work that all National Societies are called to do with their government in advance to an International Conference.

Thank you very much for your attention, I will be happy to listen to your remarks and suggestions and to answer any question you may have over the next three days.

Once again, **thank you Madame President and I wish you a successful Regional Conference.**