

**Remarks at the 48th meeting of the Governing Board
International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies**

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Chair

Standing Commission of the Red Cross and Red Crescent

Geneva, 3 October 2023

Mr President [Dear Francesco],

Mr Secretary-General,

Ladies and Gentlemen Vice-Presidents, and representatives of the National Societies members of the Governing Board,

dear colleagues and friends,

Buenos días, good morning, bonjour, sabah alkhayr.

Thank you, dear Francesco, for inviting me again to say a few words at the start of this meeting of the Governing Board.

This is an especially emotional moment for me today, as it's probably the last time I'll address this Board in your presence, at its head. I fully respect and understand your decision to step down as President of the International Federation at the end of this year, and I know the Governing Board has been closely associated to this decision. But I do also realize that an important voice of the Federation and the Movement is about to step down in a few weeks' time, including in his role as a loyal member of the Standing Commission since 2017. Thank you Francesco, although I am sure that, between now and December, we will have other opportunities to exchange opinions on various topics of importance to the Movement.

Whether we like it or not, we must already prepare for a major transition in the governance of the International Federation. Faced with a relatively unprecedented situation, it is the responsibility of all of us, in this room and throughout the Movement, to ensure that such a transition takes place in a spirit of trust and unity within our Movement.

As the proposed theme for next year's 34th International Conference underlines, our current reality is that we must navigate uncertainty while aiming to strengthen our commitment to Humanity.

This applies to our Movement too, which is also going through a time of uncertainty, but must nevertheless remain focused on strengthening preparedness and response to today's immense humanitarian challenges. Armed conflicts and violence, natural disasters and climate change all bring their own uncertainties to which we must adapt.

Uncertainty affects us inside the Movement, when there is a change of governance within the Federation, and when the ICRC, like many National Societies, is hit by a serious financial crisis, obliging us to review strategies and ambitions, and perhaps to do more with less.

Sadly, uncertainty also means deep concern when, instead of highlighting the crucial role that National Societies play as auxiliaries to the public authorities in the humanitarian field, when the independence, impartiality and neutrality of some National Societies are being undermined by interference from their own authorities. This difficult situation has even this year led to the dissolution of one National Society and I cannot imagine a more worrying precedent for our worldwide Red Cross and Red Crescent network.

In an increasingly polarized world, our commitment to principled humanitarian action is also the guarantee of our Unity. Let us cherish and preserve it, in our efforts to seek what brings us together rather than what divides us.

Efforts to strengthen each of our members at local level are also essential to our Unity, including those to ensure that each component is better equipped and more robust to preserve its own integrity and the collective integrity of the Movement.

The reaffirmation of our humanitarian principles will be at the heart of next year's statutory meetings. I urge you to take an active part in them and contribute to the preparation and success of our unique International Conference and Council of Delegates, including through contacts with your respective Governments.



Thank you very much for your attention and I wish you a very successful Governing Board meeting. Merci, Shukran, Gracias!

Good luck, bonne chance, buena suerte.