

## Opening speech for the 2017 Council of Delegates

**George Weber**

Chair, Standing Commission of the Red Cross and Red Crescent  
Antalya, 10 November 2017

### *Check against delivery*

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Dear Presidents and leaders of the ICRC, the IFRC and the National Societies from all over the world,

Fellow members of the Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement,

Distinguished observers and guests,

Günaydın, Good morning, Bonjour, Sabah Alkhayr, Buenos días!

It is a privilege for me to address you at the opening of this Council of Delegates which embodies the universality of our Movement so well. We are all here in Antalya, a crossroad of civilizations in history and an ancient city founded in a region once known as “the land of all tribes”. What better place for our global network to meet?

On the outset, I want to express the **gratitude of the Standing Commission to the Turkish Red Crescent**, for hosting our Movement during these eight days and for the commitment and hard work of its volunteers, staff and leadership, which supported the management teams of the Federation and the ICRC, to prepare these important meetings.

Of course, I also want to take this opportunity to **warmly congratulate the newly elected leadership of the International Federation**, especially its President, Francesco Rocca, his Vice-Presidents and all members of the new Governing Board. The Standing Commission very much looks forward to working very closely with you over the period of your mandate. We are deeply convinced that **we must work closer together to strengthen the alignment and coherence of our visions, strategies, decisions and activities between all components of the Movement on key matters of common concern**. I extend my best wishes for success with the challenges you face, including your responsibility to launch the Federation’s second century, in two years’ time.

As you probably all know, I had the honor of very recently taking over the chairmanship of the Standing Commission from **Mrs Eva von Oelreich**, the previous chair. She decided at the end of August to step down from her membership within the Commission for very understandable family reasons. I would like to pay special tribute to her remarkable commitment over the past two years as Chair of the Standing Commission.

You may recall that a report on Movement Fora was submitted at the 2013 Council of Delegates in Australia, which urged the Standing Commission to “**continue exploring further ways and means to improve [...] the Movement’s statutory meetings**”. Four days ago, we had the **joint opening ceremony** of both the Council of Delegates and the General Assembly of the Federation. Yesterday,

we had a **joint awards ceremony**. And you certainly have noticed how our meetings now benefit from the use of the **Movement's logo** adopted two years ago, plus the way in which the substance of the meetings have been arranged and the multitude of engagement sessions held beforehand. These are all changes that demonstrate the implementation of our 2013 decision. **We hope to make even further improvements, with the support of National Societies and in close collaboration with the leadership and governing bodies of the Federation and the ICRC.**

We also had another innovation... I hope you learned and were inspired by the **RC2 Forum** of yesterday that offered the opportunity of expanding our mind with more open and forward-thinking exchanges on emerging trends, humanitarian concerns and some tools to address them. While the Movement has made much progress over the years, there is still much to be done. **We must be prepared to ensure the future relevance of its structures and actions to continue serving the most vulnerable effectively and efficiently. Instead of only talking to ourselves within a global, but at time an insular Movement, it is good to open ourselves to voices that are external to us.** You all know that we work in an increasingly competitive environment, and thus, we need to continue to learn how better to develop ourselves, our institutions and our relationships with the States, and how to influence and foster better relations with our humanitarian partners.

[in French<sup>1</sup>] Je ne sais pas quand notre Mouvement accueillera en son sein une nouvelle Société Nationale établie sur une autre planète, ... ni le nombre de robots intelligents que nous compterons un jour parmi nos forces de travail. En revanche, j'observe, et nous observons tous, que le monde qui nous entoure change rapidement et que notre Mouvement doit s'adapter à ce nouveau rythme, et savoir traduire les mots et les nouvelles connaissances en action. Certains changements créent de nouvelles vulnérabilités. En même temps, ils nous offrent aussi de nouvelles opportunités pour mieux y répondre. Ils renforcent aussi notre responsabilité à faire corps dans la parole et dans l'action, dans un esprit **de respect mutuel des rôles et responsabilités actuels de chaque composante, de coordination stratégique là où nous travaillons mieux ensemble, et plus important de redevabilité et de transparence vis-à-vis de nos bénéficiaires et donateurs.**

Many issues proposed on our agenda stem from decisions we made in previous Councils, but also were reinforced by new trends and challenges we discussed in the RC2 Forum and in other instances of humanitarian dialogue.

While the **Council of Delegates contribute to building common visions, strategies and positions in response to and in anticipation of crucial shifts and challenges of our world**, this year it is time for our Movement to unite further and decide on important matters and new ambitions, such as:

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<sup>1</sup> [English] I do not know when our Movement will host a new National Society established on another planet,... or the number of intelligent robots that will one day be counted as part of our workforce. On the other hand, I observe, and we all observe, that the world around us is changing rapidly and **that our Movement must be able to adapt to the new pace, translating words and new knowledge into action.** Some of these changes create new vulnerabilities. At the same time, they offer us new opportunities to better respond to them. They also reinforce our responsibility to speak and act as one, in a spirit of **mutual respect for the current roles and responsibilities of each component, strategic coordination where we work better together, and most important accountability and transparency to our beneficiaries and donors.**

- We must reemphasize our call for **real compliance with obligations under international humanitarian law and their strengthening.**
- We must persevere **on the difficult path towards the elimination of nuclear weapons.**
- We must strive to respond to the suffering of vulnerable migrants regardless of their migratory status, **while calling upon States to take primary responsibility to address critical protection and assistance needs of migrants, and respect their dignity and their rights.**
- **We must acknowledge present gaps and new challenges and commit to perform better on such crucial humanitarian matters as working on a common approach to future Epidemics and Pandemics, and addressing mental health and psychosocial needs, education needs and family separation issues** that arise as a consequence of armed conflict, natural disasters and other emergencies.
- And we must remain committed to the continuing work for Strengthening Movement Coordination and Cooperation and further developing Movement-wide Resource Mobilization, because it is the **promise of enhanced coherence, solidarity and harmony that our Movement so badly needs to demonstrate its collective strength and responsibility.** Once again, to act and speak as one.

Working together and mobilizing sufficient resources for our actions are essential to the performance of the Movement. In this regard, as Peter Maurer pointed out at Monday's opening ceremony, **the people's trust in the Red Cross and Red Crescent is our license to operate.** Trust is an extraordinary asset that we can't afford to let erode. **We must do everything to preserve the integrity of our institutions,** as was reinforced by Francesco Rocca at the time of his election. Despite the trust, we need to understand that challenges to integrity are real and cannot be ignored, and the exposure of our failures will discredit the collective reputation of our Movement. In the world of social media, we all now live in glass houses. **We need to ensure we have the right mechanisms and tools to prevent and resolve integrity issues. And we need to work together on them.**

[in Spanish<sup>2</sup>] Quisiera también referirme a la “Visión para el Movimiento”, que fue aprobada en 2015 y respecto de la cual la Comisión Permanente ha presentado un informe. La Comisión Permanente estuvo de acuerdo en que sería difícil y prematuro medir su impacto en los procesos de planificación estratégica específicos de cada componente del Movimiento. Por lo tanto, **no podemos sino alentarlos a todos ustedes, dirigentes y responsables de adoptar las decisiones del Movimiento, a que asuman esta Visión como propia** y promuevan su uso a través de adaptaciones pertinentes, innovadoras y ejemplares, por ejemplo, vinculando sus propios planes estratégicos con la visión. Será una forma de reiterar el concepto de un solo Movimiento.

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<sup>2</sup> [English] I would also like to comment on the "Vision for the Movement" that was approved in 2015, on which the Standing Commission reported to you. The Standing Commission agreed that it would be difficult and premature to measure the impact on the strategic planning processes specific to each component of the Movement. So **we can only encourage you all here, the Movement's leaders and decision-makers, to take ownership of the Vision** by promoting its use through relevant, innovative and exemplary adaptations, such as linking your own strategic plans to it. Thereby reiterating the concept of one Movement.

Finally, these November meetings are also an important milestone in preparing and supporting the Movement's privileged and unique dialogue with States, in particular with a view to the 2019 International Conference. In anticipation of the 2019 statutory meetings, and as I mentioned before, which will also mark the 100th anniversary of the Federation, I would like to **see the Standing Commission and the Federation's Governing Board collaborate even more closely to lead to a more integrated and harmonious design of the series of major events for the Red Cross and Red Crescent in two years' time.**

Dear colleagues, let me conclude by declaring open our Council of Delegates and wish you every success in your deliberations over the next two days, with stimulating discussions and fruitful decisions. Just remember that the world is watching and listening. Let's make a difference in the lives we are entrusted to help. Thank you.

Antalya, 10 November 2017