

**Remarks at the opening of the Governing Board
International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies**

George Weber
Chair

Standing Commission of the Red Cross and Red Crescent
Geneva, September 2017

Mr. President, dear colleagues and friends, good morning.

Thank you Mr. President for giving the Standing Commission, and me in particular, the opportunity to address the Federation's Governing Board. I do so this time in a different capacity — as the Acting Chair of the Standing Commission rather than as your Chair (former) of the Compliance and Mediation Committee.

You will excuse me, however, for not being present among you today because I only took up the chairmanship of the Standing Commission two weeks ago in rather unexpected circumstances.

Ms. Eva von Oelreich, the previous Chairperson of the Standing Commission, who most, if not all of you know well, decided at the end of August to step down from her membership within the Commission because of a close family member's illness. Although her decision is entirely understandable and must be respected, I know it must have been very difficult for Eva to take that step as we all know her deep attachment to our movement and to its ideals, as well as her years spent in service of the most vulnerable. I would like to pay special tribute to her remarkable commitment over the last two years as Chair of the Standing Commission. I am thankful for the rich and stimulating exchanges we had whenever our paths crossed, not the least in my time as her vice-chair of the Commission.

The Standing Commission, which will meet in Geneva in a few days, will therefore undergo some internal changes while ensuring the continuity of its functions and activities. At that meeting, the Chair and Vice-Chair will be chosen by its membership. Based on the Commission's rules, a new member has already agreed to join our group immediately to fill the seat left vacant by Eva. Ibrahim Osman's extensive experience and depth of knowledge will be a great asset to the Standing Commission. In its new composition, I look forward to continuing collaborations within the Standing Commission, as well as with our partners, in particular your Governing Board, which itself will undergo an important renewal at the next General Assembly of the Federation in November.

Presently, the preparation of the 2017 Council of Delegates is obviously the priority for the Standing Commission, the same way preparing for the next General Assembly of the Federation is for your Governing Board. These statutory meetings of the Federation and the Movement will take place two months from now, and I am well aware that the approaching finish line still calls for important decisions to be made and collective efforts to be mobilized in order to guarantee their success. In this regard, I wish to express the gratitude of the Standing Commission to the management teams of the Federation, the ICRC and the host National Society, the Turkish Red Crescent, for their commitment and hard work to prepare these important meetings.

Next week, the Standing Commission will review the agenda of the Council of Delegates and all of its working documents. They include reports and proposals for resolutions that are themselves the result of extensive research, reflection and consultations with National Societies on key humanitarian issues.

The Standing Commission welcomes the fact that the Council of Delegates, as much as the General Assembly, allows our Movement to build common visions, positions and strategies on crucial issues such as protecting and responding to the needs of vulnerable migrants; strengthening and complying with international humanitarian law; responding to family

separation and missing persons; and so on. The Standing Commission is particularly attentive 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.

These November meetings are also an important milestone in preparing and supporting the Movement's dialogue with states, in particular with a view to the 2019 International Conference. This is certainly what we expect the Council of Delegates to achieve. Moreover, the additional day of the RC2 Forum, scheduled for November ninth between the General Assembly and the Council, will offer more open and forward-thinking exchanges on emerging trends and humanitarian concerns. The Movement must be prepared to ensure its actions' future relevance to serve the most vulnerable, as well as strategically developing its members and position vis-à-vis the states, the humanitarian community and other partners.

In anticipation of the 2019 statutory meetings, which will also mark the 100th anniversary of the Federation, I would like to see the Standing Commission and the Governing Board collaborate as closely as possible. We can enhance exchanges with the Governing Board's working group on statutory meetings, and perhaps even create a joint working group with the new Governing Board in November. These are two suggestions we can explore together in early 2018 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.

Mr. President, dear colleagues, I wish you every success in your deliberations over the next few days, and look forward to seeing some of you next week in Geneva, and others in Antalya in November.