

**Address to the 46th Governing Board
of the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies**

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Chair

Standing Commission of the Red Cross and Red Crescent

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(as delivered – original Spanish)

Mr President, Mr Secretary General, dear colleagues and friends: Buenos días, good morning, bonjour, sabah alkhayr.

Now, I will continue my intervention, as I always do, in my own language, Spanish.

Thank you, Mr. President, and dear friend Francesco, for giving me again the opportunity to address the Governing Board of the Federation.

On behalf of the Standing Commission, first of all, I would like to extend my warmest congratulations to all of you, newly elected leaders of the Governing Board. I am glad to see so many friendly faces and also to meet new ones that are getting involved in the governance of the International Federation. As I mentioned during the Council of Delegates in June, I want to especially congratulate the 12 women who were elected to the Governing Board of the Federation, and who, together with those who were already there, represent their respective National Societies. The commitment of all the leaders of the Movement, and the support work from GLOW Red to so many valuable women, is enabling our Movement to be increasingly inclusive and diverse. I hope that this trend will continue in the future and I trust that the Governing Board will formulate its vision and will carry the role and weight of women in our Organization forward.

Now, after the two years that we have "endured" virtual meetings, I want to tell you that I am delighted to be able to meet again here in Geneva, in person!

I would like to take this opportunity to warmly welcome Mirjana Spoljaric Egger, the new president of the ICRC, who is coming to meet this Governing Board for the first time and who will soon assume her responsibility as a member of the Standing Commission. Mirjana, I look forward to our future cooperation (between the Commission and the ICRC).

The role of the Standing Commission in the governance of the Movement and regarding its Statutory Meetings is perhaps less well known and visible in the Red Cross and Red Crescent family than that of the Board within the Federation. However, since 1928 when the concept of the Movement emerged, reuniting all the components of the Red Cross and Red Crescent and since its first Statutes, the Standing Commission has fulfilled its role as permanent trustee of the International Conference.

The Standing Commission is composed of 9 persons, including 4 ex officio members of the International Federation and the ICRC and 5 members from National Societies, elected in their personal capacity, by the International Conference. Currently the members are:

- Francesco Rocca and Niamh Lawless, President and Under-Secretary General for Management Policy, Strategy and Corporate Services, who represent you and the entire International Federation,
- In addition, as representatives of the ICRC are the new president, Mirjana Spoljaric Egger and Katrin Wiegmann, deputy Director-General.
- And the five elected members are: from Canada (George Weber), Cook Islands (Fine Tui'tupou-Arnold), Kenya (Abbas Gullet), Kuwait (Hilal Al-Sayer) and me from Spain.

Originally, the Standing Commission was seen first and foremost as a conciliation body, responsible for settling differences of opinion that might arise between the ICRC and the League of Red Cross Societies (now the IFRC).

Today, our role and functions are essentially defined in Article 18 of the Statutes of the Movement, which I will briefly summarize:

- As trustee of the International Conference, our task is to prepare the agenda and programme of the International Conference and the Council of Delegates and to encourage the development and implementation of their decisions and the policies and strategies of the entire Movement.

On this point, allow me to express my conviction that the IFRC Governing Board and the Standing Commission have great areas of common interest and an open field for a strengthened dialogue, in particular to harmonize in the best possible way the agendas of our Statutory Meetings (International Conference, Council of Delegates and General Assembly), and to ensure, not only a more complementary and coherent development of the global Red Cross and Red Crescent policies and commitments, but also a more effective follow-up and implementation of the adopted Resolutions.

- On the other hand, although the Standing Commission does not have an operational function, it has the general, partly diffuse, function of promoting harmony and encouraging coordination in the work of all components, leading to consideration of

issues that concern the Movement as a whole and, where appropriate, resolving differences of opinion that may arise regarding the interpretation and application of the Statutes.

However, the Standing Commission need not be the arbiter or judge of all disputes and differences in the Movement. Nevertheless, I would like to recall our unconditional readiness to facilitate dialogue and find solutions when harmony could be endangered, and other dispute settlement or conciliation mechanisms have proved unsuccessful or ineffective. This is how I understand the contribution of the Standing Commission for the resolution of problems related to the implementation of the Seville Agreement 2.0 adopted last June, as reflected in its final provisions. As such, the Standing Commission shall protect and ensure respect for the functions and mandate of all components of the Red Cross and Red Crescent.

With this reminder of the role of the Standing Commission, you will better understand the importance I attach to having a working relationship with all of you, based on trust and an open, balanced and constructive spirit.

Given our respective areas of responsibility, I am convinced that the Governing Board and the Standing Commission must ensure that the IFRC and the Movement, as a whole, share the same vision, speak with one voice and act coherently and effectively on key issues and challenges of common interest to our Red Pillar.

At our next meeting in December, the Standing Commission will take note of the results of the recent Council of Delegates held in Geneva last June. As you know, the Statutory Meetings took place this year in a very particular context, with the postponement due to COVID-19 and with restrictions regarding participation. We will learn from this experience I believe we can be proud of having conducted the meetings in good general conditions and where the spirit of mutual understanding allowed for interesting discussions and the adoption by consensus of resolutions on substantive issues.

Let me highlight the importance that the Standing Commission attaches to the collective and individual responsibility of the members of our Statutory Meetings (the 194 components of the Movement) to ensure adequate follow-up, accountability and compliance with the resolutions we adopt. Unfortunately, despite the substantial efforts made in the drafting, consultation, consensus-building and reporting processes around resolutions, we in the Standing Commission still see significant challenges in the heterogeneous practices of preparation and follow-up of these resolutions and policies. The level of knowledge about them is often insufficient and their life cycle and obsolescence, their practical utility and their scope - mandatory, recommendatory or declarative - remain unclear to some members.

These shortcomings need to be better analyzed and carefully addressed in order to improve the understanding, coherence, impact and compliance with the Movement's resolutions and

policies, thereby contributing to strengthening the integrity of its components. From the Standing Commission we will continue our work and reflection in order to improve the Movement's policy framework.

These concerns should also be reflected in our efforts to prepare for the upcoming Statutory Meetings. At this moment, we are at the starting point for the preparation of the 34th International Conference and the next Council of Delegates as well as the IFRC General Assembly in October 2024.

To be as relevant as possible, the preparation of the Statutory Meetings requires the maximum commitment of all components of the Movement, including National Societies as actors and "influencers" in their respective countries. In this particular forum of the Governing Board, I ask you to encourage your colleagues both from your own National Societies, as well as others in your respective regions, to take an active part in the efforts, on the one hand, to follow up and implement previously adopted resolutions, and on the other hand, to prepare ambitious draft agendas and themes and to bring our common goals into humanitarian dialogue with governments and other stakeholders.

In preparation for the upcoming International Conference, we have a responsibility as a Red Pillar to engage in dialogue with states.

The world's population is once again facing great dangers: the intensification of armed conflicts, disasters caused by climate change, the polarization of international relations, and economic and social insecurity... and on all these issues we must make heard the humanitarian appeal that we approved by consensus at the last Council of Delegates (https://rcrcconference.org/app/uploads/2022/07/CD22-Appeal-NIHA_FINAL_EN.pdf) and in which we urged the States Parties to the Geneva Conventions and other actors to respect neutral and impartial humanitarian action.

In any case, let us not fall into despair or disillusionment. As leaders of the Movement, it is up to us to foster hope through our actions on behalf of vulnerable people. It is our duty to tip the balance on the side of collective action, trust and hope for the people we work with and for.

Dear friends, I reiterate the commitment and desire of the Standing Commission to work together on issues of importance to the Movement and at the service of harmony among its 194 members. And I remain at your disposal for any questions and suggestions you may have for the Standing Commission.

Thank you very much for your attention.

I wish you a good meeting of the Governing Board and every success in your discussions.