

**Remarks at the 47th meeting of the Governing Board
International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies**

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Chair

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Mr President, Mr Secretary-General, Mr Vice-President, dear colleagues and friends, buenos días, good morning, bonjour, sabah alkhayr.

I will continue in Spanish, my mother tongue.

Thank you, Mr President, for inviting me to say a few words at the start of this meeting of the Governing Board on issues that concern all of us present, as representatives and leaders of the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement.

Before I go on, I would like to spare a thought for, among others, the thousands of people who are still suffering from the consequences of the earthquake that struck Turkey and Syria, and for those affected by the armed conflicts in Ukraine/Russia and Sudan, where the impact on civilians is as bad as ever.

Yesterday afternoon, at the invitation of the IFRC's vice-president, Ms Maha al-Barjas, I met with several members of the board to discuss the statutory meetings. As I am sure the vice-president will present what we spoke about in detail, I won't touch any more on that here.

Given this particularly turbulent time, a time in which the world is struggling with various crises and we, as components of the Movement, have to overcome the challenges before us to meet the needs of those for whom we work, it is

crucial that we stick together as a Movement, maintain our solidarity, and continue to deal with governance issues in a lucid, unified and exemplary manner.

Yesterday, the eighth of May, we celebrated World Red Cross and Red Crescent Day. At the ceremony you attended, organized by the IFRC, I had the honour of reading out a message to mark the occasion on behalf of the presidents of the IFRC, the ICRC and myself.

Allow me to reread a few lines now: **“The world has borne witness to the growing effectiveness of our Movement at responding to crisis after crisis and providing principled humanitarian assistance. Our strength resides in our unity, in our determination to carry forward the ideals of neutral, impartial and independent humanitarian action, and in our commitment to the humanitarian cause.”**

As a Movement, we are experiencing financial difficulties, such as those facing the ICRC, that will have knock-on effects for both the ICRC’s operations and for many National Societies that it supports, as well as internal problems.

I trust that the members of the Governing Board and senior management will find a suitable solution that will preserve the cohesion and unity of the IFRC and the Movement.

The last time I spoke to you, in October, I took the liberty of speaking to you in detail about the role of the Standing Commission as one of the statutory bodies of the Movement and the trustee of the International Conference.

Today, I would like to remind you that the Standing Commission is tasked with promoting harmony among the components, and I would reiterate our unconditional availability to facilitate dialogue and find solutions.

Having said that, let me now focus on preparations for the statutory meetings in 2024, in particular the 34th International Conference.

As you all know, the proposed theme for the 34th International Conference is “Navigate uncertainty – Strengthen humanity”. There are three main pillars: “Respect international humanitarian law”, “Respond to humanitarian needs and risks” and “Enable sustainable, locally led action”.

The consultation process has already begun. The concept note on the 34th International Conference has been shared with the members of the Conference, the National Societies and the states party to the Geneva Conventions.

I would like to encourage you once again to actively participate and contribute the opinions of your respective National Societies in the consultations on the concept note, which are the starting point in preparing for the Conference.

In the next meeting of the Standing Commission, towards the end of June 2023, we shall assess and examine the findings of these consultations, which will enable us to draw up a draft agenda for the 34th International Conference and the 2024 Council of Delegates.

Once again, I would ask you to actively participate in each step of the consultations. And I urge you to coordinate with your respective governments when preparing for the International Conference. We have a responsibility to be talking with the states.

The members of the Standing Commission are available to actively participate in discussions with National Societies during the regional conferences scheduled for this year (such as the Inter-American Conference, the Pan-African Conference and the Asia-Pacific Regional Conference), which we shall attend as observers.

Dear friends, I reiterate the Standing Commission's commitment and desire to work with you to ensure harmony among the 194 members and on the big and important issues so as to maintain a united and mutually supportive Movement.

As always, I remain at your disposal for any consultations and suggestions you may wish to have with or make to the Standing Commission.

Thank you for your attention.

I hope you have a good meeting and wish you much success in your discussions.