

Bulletin

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Letter from the Chair

Dear friends,

It is my pleasure to address you all again through this Bulletin. There is always much to share.

In my letter of this issue, I would like to emphasize the preparations being made for the 2024 Statutory Meetings, especially the 34th International Conference.

Following the postponement of the Statutory Meetings in 2023, given the exceptional circumstances generated by the COVID-19 pandemic, the Council of Delegates in 2022 decided that the next Statutory Meetings would be held in 2024. So, I am pleased to confirm that the next International Conference will be held in Geneva from 28 to 31 October 2024, preceded by the Council of Delegates (27 to 28 October) and the 24th session of the General Assembly of the International Federation.

The countdown has begun for us at the Standing Commission and for the ICRC and the IFRC, as co-organizers of the International Conference. But above all, the countdown has also begun for members, in particular the States Parties to the Geneva Conventions and the National Societies of the Red Cross and Red Crescent, whose active participation in preparing for the



34th International Conference is crucial if we want to mark a difference and make humanitarian action stronger and more relevant in uncertain times.

As trustee of the International Conference, the Standing Commission will prepare the agenda and programme of the International Conference. A robust, interactive and inclusive process of consultation and engagement will be established with Conference members to ensure that the agenda and commitments being proposed are commensurate with the current humanitarian challenges.

In this regard, the first step, in early 2023, will be to share the concept note for the 34th International Conference, which is currently in the process of being endorsed by the Standing Commission. All Conference members will be asked to participate, comment on and enrich the document with their contributions.

It is the Standing Commission's commitment and mandate to follow up on

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the resolutions adopted and ensure that they are promoted and properly implemented, and we will continue to pursue this work.

With that in mind, I would like to remind you of the need to implement and follow up on the resolutions of the 33rd International Conference and to report back on the progress made on the resolutions of the 2022 Council of Delegates.

I would not want to end without welcoming Ms Mirjana Spoljaric, the new president of the ICRC, who started in October and has joined the Standing Commission as an *ex officio* member.

I would like to thank everyone who kindly contributed to this edition of the Bulletin. Special thanks go to Ms Margareta Wahlström for her article and for leading GLOW Red, the

Global Network for Women Leaders in the Movement. I have myself been a part of this network and will continue to support it in the future. But while progress has been made, we can still do more to boost women into leadership positions in the Movement.

Finally, I would like to take this opportunity to send you my best wishes for 2023.

Yours sincerely,

Hercedes Bahré



Happy new year and best wishes
Bonne année et meilleurs voeux
Feliz año nuevo y mejores deseos
سنة جديدة سعيدة وأطيب التمنيات

>> 34th International Conference in 2024: The way forward

Time to shape the next International Conference agenda

In June 2022, the Standing Commission announced its [decision](#) to postpone the 34th International Conference of the Red Cross and Red Crescent from 2023 to 2024. The 34th International Conference is now scheduled to be held **from 28 to 31 October 2024 in Geneva, Switzerland**. The 196 states party to the Geneva Conventions, 192 National Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC) and the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), as well as a large number of observers concerned, will come together and examine the most pressing humanitarian matters of today. The International Conference will be preceded by the Council of Delegates of the Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement (27–28 October) and the 24th session of the IFRC General Assembly.

We are almost two years away from this event, giving us the time needed to shape the agenda, debates and commitments that are most relevant to today's major humanitarian challenges. The time has come for the members of the International Conference to participate and actively contribute to this work. From February 2023, a **concept note for the 34th International Conference** will be circulated to kick-start consultations. This is your chance to share your proposals and give your feedback.

Be ready to participate in the first round of consultations in early 2023. There will be more opportunities to give your feedback on the agenda, programme and expected outcomes of the International Conference through an iterative drafting and consultation process. We encourage you to engage and make sure your voice is heard.

Milestones on the preparation of the 34th International Conference and Council of Delegates in 2024



>> Walk The Talk: From resolutions to actions

In 2019, the 33rd International Conference adopted [8 resolutions](#). These were supplemented by voluntary commitments from participants in the form of [151 pledges](#). The Council of Delegates adopted [12 resolutions](#) in 2019 and [13 resolutions](#) in 2022. All resolutions and pledges amount to calls to action for members to make a difference in the service of humanity. This section highlights some of the progress being made.

Responsibility to implement and report on previous resolutions and pledges

In preparation for the 34th International Conference of the Red Cross and Red Crescent, please [submit your report](#) on pledges and resolutions of the 33rd International Conference!

States, National Societies, the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC), and the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) are taking innovative and effective action to implement [adopted resolutions](#) and [pledges](#) made at the 33rd International Conference. On the lead-up to the 34th International Conference, progress reports are invaluable to assessing the achievements of, and challenges to delivering on, the commitments previously made.

Conference members are encouraged to share their progress using the real-time online reporting platform on the [rcrcconference.org](#) website. It is a space where participants can highlight their successes and point out the main difficulties encountered to incorporate resolutions into everyday actions. The website also includes a [blog](#) with various articles on the follow-up to resolutions of the International Conference and the Council of Delegates since 2019.

Sharing your reports helps to demonstrate the collective impact of Conference members on the community as well as the partnerships entered by the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement, governments and others. Additionally, it showcases experiences in implementing the resolutions and pledges, inspiring other Conference members to take similar action. Finally, it allows other members to offer their support when encountering challenges during implementation.

Your reports can be submitted at any time and in a dynamic manner. To be considered for recognition in the official reports on the 34th International Conference, please ensure that you submit your latest reports by June 2024.

For any questions about the reporting system, the blog, or the International Conference, please contact: conferences@rcrcconference.org.

Resolution “Strengthening anticipatory action in the Movement : Our way forward.”

On 22 June 2022, the Council of Delegates [adopted a resolution](#) marking an important milestone in the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement’s efforts to shift from providing assistance in reaction to people finding themselves in vulnerable situations to providing assistance in anticipation of such situations. Building on decades of experience in disaster preparedness and in pioneering anticipatory approaches, such as forecast-based financing, the resolution “Strengthening anticipatory action in the Movement: Our way forward” commits the Movement to scaling up anticipatory action so that more people and countries are safer from multiple predictable hazards. The resolution, initiated by the [German Red Cross](#), the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC), the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) and the [Climate Centre](#), aims to increase the capacities of the Movement to act ahead of extreme events by calling on its components, inter alia, to integrate anticipatory action into operational frameworks and processes, to increase investments in the anticipatory action capacities of National Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, to strengthen knowledge, exchange and learning around anticipatory action and to improve existing approaches by expanding them to non-weather hazards and addressing compounding risks, including in conflict-affected areas.

Since the resolution’s adoption, the number of anticipatory action plans produced by National Societies has increased. The IFRC’s anticipatory pillar of the Disaster Response Emergency Fund (DREF)

has accepted eight so-called Early Action Protocols (EAPs) with an additional three being under review. Moreover, an EAP for population movement is being prepared, while initial discussions for EAPs in conflict-affected areas are under way. In addition, the IFRC eased National Societies’ access to funding for the implementation of anticipatory action under the DREF’s response pillar. Also, the [Anticipation Hub](#), as the central platform for facilitating knowledge exchange, learning, guidance and advocacy on anticipatory action, has increased the number of its partners from 89 to 102.

To monitor and guide the implementation, a progress report is to be submitted to the 2024 Council of Delegates. In line with their commitment to work with states to promote adoption of and increased investment in anticipatory approaches, Movement components furthermore seek to include anticipatory action in the agenda of the 34th International Conference as a humanitarian matter of common interest to representatives of the components of the Movement as well as states parties.

By
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Learn more:

- [Resolution “Strengthening anticipatory action in the Movement: Our way forward”](#) (CD/22/R2)
- [Background document](#) (CD/22/9)
- [Anticipation Hub](#)
- [Blog Post “Red Cross Red Crescent Movement commits to scale up anticipatory action”](#) (22 June 2022)

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>> Standing Commission members' corner

A talk with Francesco Rocca

Francesco Rocca is the President of the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC) and of the Italian Red Cross.

Mr Rocca has been a member of the Standing Commission since 2017, when he was elected as President of the IFRC. He was re-elected in 2022.



What are the major challenges that you are currently most concerned about and that the Movement, its components and statutory bodies should give priority attention to over the next two years?

We are going through a period in which new challenges are surfacing on a daily basis. The hunger crisis, climate change and armed conflicts, combined with the economic crisis, are threats that face us all. There are growing geopolitical tensions involving countries so powerful that the impacts affect everyone on the globe. These events are unfolding in the aftermath of the worst global pandemic to hit humanity in 100 years, and its many impacts are still reverberating. A major event in one part of the world can have ripple effects in every other part of the planet, and such global threats require cooperation on a scale we have not seen before.

The global challenges – identified in the [IFRC Strategy 2030](#) – that we as a Movement need to focus on are the climate crisis, migration, widening gaps in health and wellbeing and the growing number of crises and disasters.

The climate crisis is a daily reality for millions of people, and we must scale up efforts to tackle it immediately. We need to be smarter and invest even more in

resilience and preparedness, advocating to get funds to the most vulnerable communities, and we need to use more foresight to help us act in anticipation of crises. By investing in adaptation, the world can alleviate the problems of a future marked by escalating suffering and ballooning response costs. Sadly, the hunger crisis on the African continent is a clear example of this; we all knew that climate change, together with social instability, would push entire communities to the brink of a food crisis, but the international community did not intervene. And now it is almost too late for millions of people.

We are likely to see a significant increase in the number of people on the move in the future. We need to continue developing common approaches to support migrants at every stage of their journey. Our principled and value-based work is more relevant than ever as we strive to improve social inclusion and banish the fear of diversity. Our response must build bridges and ensure everyone has access to humanitarian support, regardless of their legal status.

The COVID-19 pandemic has reminded us that health, including mental health, is a priority, but it also sadly highlighted the disparities that exist in the world today. Here again, the community-based approach and

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the role of local actors are critical to saving lives and avoiding suffering; strong National Societies mean strong local communities.

These challenges all have a common thread: they begin and end in the community. Trust is the keyword; we must invest in local action, engaging communities and creating trust. This is the only way to ensure access and reach more vulnerable people.

What specific areas would you, as a member of the Standing Commission, want to advocate for or promote in the Movement?

The uncertainty and humanitarian threats that lie ahead require us to constantly adapt, stay agile and find new ways of working together. The many vulnerable people in our communities will rely on us to be the leading humanitarian actor providing neutral and independent humanitarian assistance. We need to build trust and be united as a network, and we also need to adapt and transform to stay relevant and ensure that we thrive as a Movement in the future.

The question you put to me is twofold. Internally, we need to build on the progress made in rolling out

and implementing the [Seville Agreement 2.0](#) which establishes a new set of rules for us to adhere to. We need to walk the talk when it comes to the localization of the humanitarian agenda, putting our National Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies at the centre of every decision and action. This is critical to our being efficient and effective; our volunteers are making a difference every day on the ground in their local communities, and as a Movement we must strengthen and support them. If we are serious about the localization and decolonization of humanitarian aid, we must act accordingly.

Externally, we need to advocate for the importance of independent humanitarian action and of never politicizing actions that save lives. This can be best done by leveraging the role of the International Conference of the Red Cross and Red Crescent. We also need to promote the significance of the International Conference and highlight the unique framework that this institution provides. In this complex world, where multilateral decision-making is losing ground, we must have a stronger International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement able to engage with all parties to protect our Principles and advocate for an end to the politicization of humanitarian aid.

>> Opinion

153 years of awareness, but little else. The role of women in the Red Cross and Red Crescent – united for change.

Count Sérurier (France) – I regret that the ladies who belong to a Red Cross Society were not admitted as members of the Conference, and I ask that this observation be included in the minutes.

President – I should explain in this regard that the International Committee did not take the initiative to specifically invite ladies, but rather invited to the Conference all those, ladies included, who were brought to its attention by the central committees. This was the guiding principle.

Count Sérurier (France) – Some of the ladies came to Geneva with the specific intention of taking part in the work of the Conference.

Mr Benoît-Champ (France) – It seems to me that there is no reason why these ladies, after being introduced by central committee members, should not be admitted to join our midst.

Mr Louis Micheli (Geneva) – I only ask that these ladies be presented by the members of central committees, and not as individuals, but in their capacities as members of central committees.

Mr Benoît-Champ's proposal was put to the vote. It was adopted with Mr Micheli's amendment.

[Report of the 3rd International Conference of the Red Cross, Geneva, 1884, p. 72](#)

These exchanges show that the role that women play in the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement (Movement) has been questioned for more than a century – but little has changed.

In 1987, the General Assembly of the League of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies – now known as the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC) – adopted a resolution on “Women in Development”. In 1990, the Henry Dunant Institute (HDI), in existence between 1965 and 1998, started a project using a questionnaire that was sent to all 148 National Societies and to 14 others in formation. The response rate was high, with 103 replies. The resulting HDI report, *Women's Role in the Red Cross/Red Crescent*, provided important statistical evidence on the role of women in the Movement. At the 20th International Conference of the Red Cross and Red Crescent (International Conference) in 1965, women accounted for 23 per cent of all attendees; but at the 25th International Conference in 1986, only 18 per cent were women. In National Societies, 17.2 per cent of presidents and secretaries-general were women and the average proportion of women in their executive bodies was 24.6 per cent.

Fast forward to the IFRC's General Assembly in 2017 and the figures hadn't changed much. In the Governing Board elections – to appoint the president, vice-presidents and board members – only 17 per cent of the appointments were women!

Meanwhile, the external environment in which humanitarian organizations operate had changed dramatically, and concerted efforts had resulted in changes to ensure that women would and could assume high-level leadership and management roles. The 1990 HDI study mentioned that other organizations had made decisive progress in fully utilizing all their human resources. The study stated: “If the Red Cross/Red Crescent is unable to successfully tap the multi-faceted talents of women at its upper organizational levels, it will squander some of its most important assets. In an era of intense competition among relief and development organizations, the Red Cross/Red Crescent cannot afford to stereotype and frustrate its own female personnel.”

The elections of the IFRC's Governing Board in 2017 triggered a feeling that something must be done. A new, short and succinct resolution was tabled and welcomed with overwhelming support at the General Assembly, followed by a similar [resolution at the Council of Delegates](#). All members of the Movement, as well as the Standing Commission, committed to take action in their areas of responsibility.

A group of female leaders left the General Assembly with unanswered questions. Why had there been so little progress in so many years? And how could we ensure that action would be taken now, and by whom? After informal consultations, it was agreed that if

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women themselves did not act, then they would not see any results or change.

This is how the GLOW Red network was born, with a single objective: to change the electoral makeup of the Movement and to do so as a network that welcomes and embraces senior women from all parts of the world. We would work as a network – not as an organization. We would advocate for women to take on leadership roles, present facts and research data, motivate and encourage women to apply for senior roles, and provide training and learning from our collective experiences. The pandemic moved our work into the digital space, but we kept up the momentum and focused on the elections at the 2022 General Assembly. This would be a true test of our campaign. Would anything change as a result?

The Movement did indeed act on the 2017 Council of Delegates resolution and the IFRC's Governing Board gave a decisive push by amending the IFRC's statutes to introduce a female quota in elections. The amendment was adopted at the 2019 General Assembly. At the 2022 elections, women accounted for 53 per cent of the appointments to the IFRC's Governing Board – an achievement that so many people have contributed to. And this is just the beginning.

GLOW Red will continue its work. If the progress made in the 2022 elections is to be maintained, women

must continue to rise to the top of National Societies' executive bodies. GLOW Red looks forward to working with and supporting female and male leaders in this important work. Over the years – and the shift to digital during the pandemic has been most helpful – many younger women have joined the network and taken part in activities and events. These leaders and future leaders are searching for a space of their own – and GLOW Red will support them. The EmpowerED programme is a great start, but it will and must grow further.

While GLOW Red was initially questioned and perhaps viewed with some suspicion, over the years we have earned the support of many National Societies; many provide GLOW Red with staff support and host our conferences and events. Most importantly, a number of male leaders are actively driving change in their own National Societies. We thank them all.

A final message from the 1990 HDI study: "To the extent that male-oriented staffing structures and institutional ignorance of the gender dynamics of the economic and social systems impede the delivery of services, the Movement will be hampered in fulfilling its humanitarian mandate." That statement is still as relevant today as it was then.

Please visit our website: GLOWRed.org

By Margareta Wahlström

Margareta Wahlström is a Swedish national who has held leadership positions with the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement and the United Nations. She is a co-founder of GLOW Red.



Find out more about GLOW Red

- Contact us: glowred@redcross.se
- Website: GLOWRed.org
- Facebook: [GLOW Red Network](https://www.facebook.com/GLOWRedNetwork)
- Facebook Group: [Gender Equality in the Red Cross Red Crescent Movement](https://www.facebook.com/GenderEqualityintheRedCrossRedCrescentMovement)
- [Working Towards Gender Parity: GLOW Red Milestones \(2017–2021\)](#)
- [Lighting the Path to Women's Leadership: A Review of GLOW Red's Four Years of Action](#), May 2022

Sources

- [Women's Role in the Red Cross/Red Crescent: Studies on Development No. 1](#), Susan L. Gibbs, Henry Dunant Institute, 1990.
- The website missrcrc.xyz is dedicated to remembering – and learning from – the myriad of women who shaped the Movement. Created by Tore Svenning, a former member of staff at the IFRC and the Standing Commission.