

Bulletin

Letter from the Chair

Dear friends,

Once again we meet through this Bulletin, one of the tools we have to communicate from the Standing Commission.

We are living in complicated and uncertain times at the national and international levels. It is at these times that the Movement must act united and show itself to be an organization capable of fulfilling its mission and meeting growing humanitarian needs effectively and efficiently.

In these lines, I would like to remember the thousands of people who are suffering the consequences of disasters and conflicts in different parts of the world where the consequences for the civilian population are increasingly difficult.

I want to express the admiration and support of the Standing Commission to work done by the volunteers and staff of all National Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies who, through their activity, are an example of service and resilience.

During the last week of June, the members of the Standing Commission met in Geneva to discuss various important issues that have or will have a significant impact on the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement. In essence, we have worked on the management and organization of the next statutory meetings, the International Conference and the Council of Delegates 2024. The Standing Commission welcomed H.E. Ambassador Jürg Lauber, Permanent Representative of Switzerland to the United Nations Office and other international organizations in Geneva, and warmly thanked him for accepting to serve as Secretary General-designate at the 34th International Conference.

Among the decisions taken, and in accordance with Articles 15.1 and 18.4 of the Statutes of the Movement and Rules 5 and 23-25 of its Rules of Procedure, the Standing Commission has decided not to



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Find out the latest decisions of the Standing Commission on this webpage: <https://standcom.ch/meetings-and-decisions/>

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convene a Council of Delegates after the Extraordinary General Assembly of the International Federation convened for 11 December 2023.

As the mandated body of the International Conference, the Standing Commission strives to ensure that the statutory meetings provide a constructive space for all members - both components of the Movement and States Parties to the Geneva Conventions - to work together on how to alleviate human suffering, protect life and health and defend human dignity, especially during armed conflict and other emergencies.

The proposed theme for the 34th International Conference is **“Navigating uncertainty – Strengthening humanity”**; there are three main pillars: **building a culture of respect for IHL, standing by our Fundamental Principles in responding to humanitarian needs and risks** and **enabling sustainable locally led action**.

We have received your comments on the Concept Note. Online meetings have been held with Geneva diplomatic missions and National Societies over the first few months of this year, and a process of consultation and engagement has been established to ensure that the agenda and proposed commitments respond to the humanitarian challenges we face today.

I encourage all members of the International Conference, both National Societies and States Parties to the Geneva Conventions, to maintain an active dialogue in their respective countries and thus contribute to the preparation of this unique forum, which must guarantee the existence of a neutral humanitarian space.

Finally, I would like to remind you of the need to implement and follow up on the resolutions of the previous International Conference and to report on the progress made on the resolutions of the 2022 Council of Delegates.

I would like to thank all those who have kindly contributed their articles to this edition of the Newsletter. Special thanks to Mr. Hugo Slim for his outstanding contribution to this issue with his opinion article.

I reiterate my request to all members that you actively participate in the various phases of consultation and share your suggestions and concerns with the Organizing Committee or the Standing Commission.

Thank you in advance for your collaboration and dedication to make the Statutory Meetings a success, and I wish you all the best for the coming months.

Yours sincerely,



Thank you for your 2022 contributions

The budget of the Standing Commission is a collaborative effort: it is funded jointly by the IFRC, the ICRC, and the National Societies, following the equitable principle of one-third each, as established by the 2007 Council of Delegates. The Standing Commission is mindful of the financial and operational burdens that all components of the Movement are facing in addressing the immense needs they encounter. Nevertheless, The Standing Commission remains committed to carrying out its mission.

The Standing Commission members appreciate National Societies' voluntary contributions and are deeply grateful to those who responded promptly to the call for contributions in May – thank you so much for supporting our work! Our thanks also go out to the IFRC, the ICRC, and the 54 National Societies listed below for their generous contributions to the 2022

budget. We hope that more National Societies will join them in supporting our collective efforts to make a positive impact on the communities we serve.

Contributions were received for the 2022 budget from the National Societies of the following countries:

Albania, Andorra, Australia, Austria, Bahrain, Bangladesh, Belgium, Bolivia, Bulgaria, Burundi, Cambodia, Canada, China, Colombia, Cook Islands, Costa Rica, Croatia, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Dominica, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Honduras, Iraq, Israel, Italy, Japan, Jordan, Republic of Korea, Kuwait, Liberia, Liechtenstein, Luxembourg, Monaco, Montenegro, Morocco, Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, Palestine, Poland, Qatar, Romania, San Marino, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Thailand, Tonga, Türkiye, United Kingdom, United States of America.

34th International Conference and Council of Delegates in 2024: The way forward

Time to shape the agendas of the International Conference and Council of Delegates

The Standing Commission is pleased to announce that the outlines of proposed agenda topics for the upcoming 34th International Conference and Council of Delegates in 2024 will be shared with members by email and on the webpages of [the Conference](#) and [the Council](#). These documents provide an initial overview of the proposed topics to be addressed at the two statutory meetings of the Red Cross and Red Crescent, reflecting key dimensions of the Movement's work today that require action and have a significant impact for people and communities on the ground.

Outline of proposed agenda topics for the 34th International Conference

Under the banner ***Navigate Uncertainty – Strengthen Humanity*** previously presented in the [Concept note](#) for the 34th International Conference, three main thematic pillars are proposed for the 34th International Conference.

1. Building a global culture of respect for international humanitarian law (IHL): in a challenging international environment, the relevance of IHL in protecting people affected by armed conflict and the commitment to building a global culture of respect for IHL will be reaffirmed. Two resolutions are taking shape, and several priority topics are being considered for plenary sessions and side events.

2. Standing by our Fundamental Principles in responding to humanitarian needs and risks: to respond effectively to the many complex, multidimensional crises, the Movement's Fundamental Principles will be reaffirmed as a commitment to respecting neutral, impartial and independent humanitarian action and securing people's access to humanitarian protection and services. Two resolutions are envisaged as well as in-depth discussions on current humanitarian challenges, such as the impact of climate change, disaster law and the funding of action to anticipate and respond to crises, and so on.

3. Enabling sustainable, locally led action: the benefits of empowering local humanitarian leadership, ownership and action will be highlighted. A resolution will be proposed, and there will be discussions showcasing the impact of increased international and domestic investment in local and national capacities, especially to strengthen the auxiliary role of National Societies in the humanitarian field.

IMPORTANT ANNOUNCEMENT

Extraordinary session of the IFRC General Assembly in 2023

The Standing Commission noted the decision of the International Federation to convene an extraordinary session of its General Assembly on 11 December 2023. Considering Article 15.1 and 18.4 of the Movement's Statutes and Rules 5 and 23-25 of its Rules of Procedure, the Standing Commission has decided not to convene a Council of Delegates of the Movement on this occasion.

These and more topics are proposed to be included in the agenda of the 34th International Conference and addressed as a resolution, in a plenary session, at a side event or through pledges.

Outline of proposed agenda topics for the Council of Delegates

The agenda of the 2024 Council of Delegates is taking shape, with topics identified in areas where it is anticipated that resolutions, discussions or progress reports may be required.

Please refer to both Conference and Council outlines of proposed agenda topics to learn more.

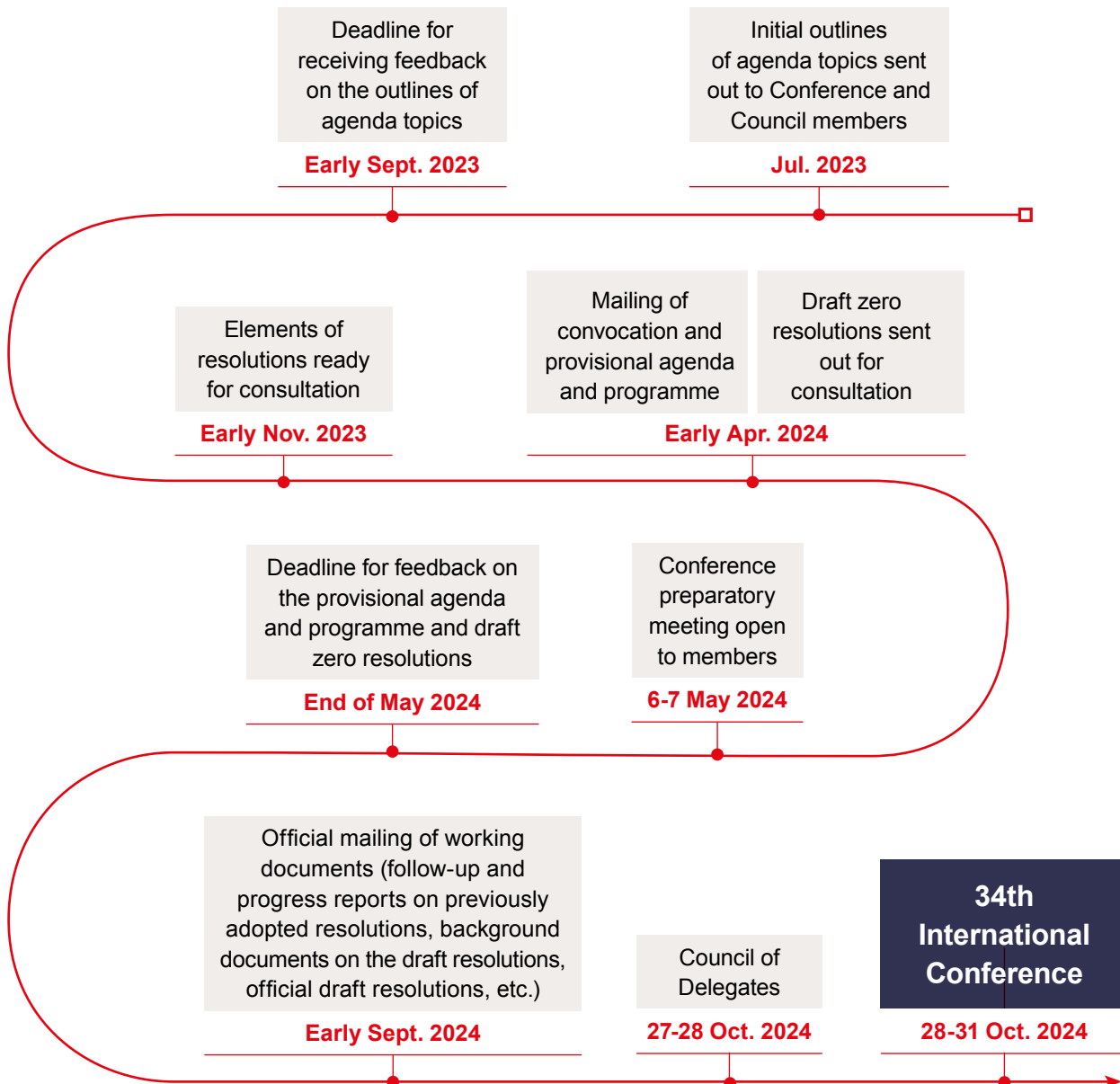
Engagement

Please share your insights and opinions on the proposed outlines of agenda topics. Your expertise and perspectives are crucial in ensuring the statutory meetings address the most pressing issues and achieve their objectives effectively.

Furthermore, there will be multiple occasions for you to provide feedback on the proposed agendas, resolutions and programmes of the meetings to ensure that they are

informed by humanitarian realities on the ground and that the outcomes enable more effective humanitarian action. In line with the Chair's request in her letter above, we strongly encourage you to actively engage in the various consultation stages and share your thoughts, suggestions and concerns. Thank you in advance for your participation and dedication to making the 34th International Conference and the 2024 Council of Delegates meaningful and impactful events.

Tentative timeline for consultations on the proposed agendas and resolutions:



Walk the Talk – from resolutions to actions

In 2019, the 33rd International Conference of the Red Cross and Red Crescent adopted [eight 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 in this regard.

Increasing the Movement’s capacity to protect personal data

In early 2022, personal data entrusted to the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) and National Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (National Societies) were breached in an unprecedented cyber operation. This prompted the 2022 Council of Delegates of the Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement, held in June of that year, to adopt a resolution on “[Safeguarding humanitarian data](#)”.

Building on the joint commitments in this and previous resolutions, such as Resolution 4 adopted at the 33rd International Conference – “Restoring family links while respecting privacy, including as it relates to personal data protection” – the ICRC has taken a number of steps to strengthen the protection of humanitarian data, especially within the Movement.

First, it has established two Humanitarian Action Programmes in the field of digital and cyber security: one with [the University of Maastricht](#), focused on training in data protection, and the other with the [University of Cambridge, focused on research](#). As at April 2023, [the training and certification programme](#) has been delivered eight times across four continents, resulting in the training of some 230 humanitarian professionals, more than 100 of whom were fully sponsored participants from National Societies.

Second, the ICRC, in a statement to the United Nations Open-ended Working Group on security of and in the use of information and communications technologies, raised the need for better protection of humanitarian organizations against digital threats, [calling on States](#) “to reaffirm that humanitarian organizations, their staff and humanitarian data must never be targeted, be it in the physical or in the digital world”. The ICRC is determined to pursue this avenue and ensure that adequate legal and policy frameworks exist to this effect.

In addition, the ICRC is working on possible technical solutions to strengthen the protection of humanitarian organizations and their data from harm. For instance, and as encouraged in the 2022 Council of Delegates resolutions, the ICRC, together with the Australian Red Cross, published a report in November 2022 entitled [Digitalizing the Red Cross, Red Crescent and Red Crystal Emblems: Benefits, Risks, and Possible Solutions](#). Since then, consultations on a “digital emblem” have been initiated with the Movement by the ICRC and Australian Red Cross, as well as with states and other stakeholders. The ICRC is also continuing to refine possible technical solutions for a “digital emblem”.

Contact information
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Building momentum to eliminate nuclear weapons

Since 1945, when the Japanese Red Cross and the ICRC witnessed first hand the appalling humanitarian consequences of the atomic bombing of Hiroshima, the Movement has been working for the prohibition and elimination of nuclear weapons. These efforts saw a major breakthrough with the adoption of the [Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons \(TPNW\)](#) in 2017 and its entry into force in 2021. At the same time, the risk that nuclear weapons will be used again has grown alarmingly. This is driven by rising tensions between nuclear-armed States, threats to use nuclear weapons, the development of new types of nuclear weapons, and expanded roles for them in military doctrines.

The 2022-2027 Action Plan on the Non-Use, Prohibition and Elimination of Nuclear Weapons (Council of Delegates resolution [CD/22/R7](#)) gives National Societies a strategy and innovative tools to confront the risks and build momentum for elimination of nuclear weapons. The plan is informed by the Movement's long-standing efforts to place the catastrophic humanitarian consequences of nuclear weapons, the rules and principles of international humanitarian law (IHL), and the interests of humanity at the centre of the nuclear weapons debate. It aims to encourage states to join the TPNW, to raise awareness of the catastrophic humanitarian consequences of nuclear weapons and the lack of any adequate humanitarian response capacity, and to promote measures to reduce

the risk of nuclear weapons being used. A Movement Support Group of around 40 National Societies coordinates its implementation. Actions in the first stage of implementation have focused on developing innovative ways for National Societies to engage their governments on nuclear weapons. These include a survey of government humanitarian response capabilities in the case of detonation of a nuclear weapon on national territory, and practical strategies for engaging governments and the public on the topic of gender and nuclear weapons, such as by working to include nuclear weapons issues in national action plans for [Women, Peace and Security](#).



By **Dr Richard Lennane**

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Learn more:

- [ICRC nuclear weapons resources](#)
- [Building momentum to eliminate nuclear weapons](#)

Learning more on the implementation of resolutions and pledges: Visit the Blog and the reporting platform

Are you interested in gaining a deeper understanding of the resolutions that were adopted at the 33rd International Conference and the 2019 and 2022 Council of Delegates?

The blog, conveniently located on the [Statutory Meetings website](#), is an invaluable resource for staying informed about advancements in relation to the adopted resolutions. We encourage you to explore the blog.

Additionally, members of the International Conference are invited to report on their implementation of resolutions and pledges on the [reporting platform](#) of the 33rd International Conference. Available reports are posted on the platform.

Standing Commission members' corner

A talk with Dr Hilal Al-Sayer

For decades Dr Al-Sayer served as a volunteer in the Kuwait Red Crescent Society of which he is currently the elected President. He was elected to the Standing Commission at the 33rd International Conference in December 2019.

Dr Hilal Al-Sayer is a physician and a general surgeon by profession. He held the position of minister of health in the State of Kuwait.



The Standing Commission's current term will end on the occasion of the 34th International Conference of the Red Cross and Red Crescent, in November 2024. What do you think are the two biggest challenges facing the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement in the meantime?

As President of the Kuwait Red Crescent Society since 2014 and a volunteer for many years before that, I have been fortunate to work alongside many dedicated individuals committed to alleviating human suffering and promoting humanitarian values. Over the years, as National Societies, the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement, and communities, we have faced several challenges that have tested our resilience and determination. I believe many more lie ahead of us. Two, in particular, which are critical to our humanitarian role, will need to be addressed by the Movement in the coming years.

The first challenge is the increasing frequency and severity of natural disasters. Climate change is causing more frequent and extreme weather events, which, in turn, are leading to devastating floods, droughts, wildfires and hurricanes. These disasters are having an increasingly profound impact on communities around the world, multiplying vulnerabilities and needs, particularly among those who are already in a precarious position because of poverty, conflict, or displacement. The Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement has a critical role to play not only in responding to these disasters but also in supporting the recovery efforts of the communities affected. It must also address the root causes of crises, to reduce the need for humanitarian interventions, and continue prioritizing the protection and promotion of human rights and the dignity of people affected by them.

To meet this challenge, we will need to strengthen our disaster-response capacities and contribute to building more resilient communities. This will require significant investment in training, to ensure we have the right level of skills and knowledge to support effective humanitarian action, and in resources and partnerships with other organizations and governments. We will also need to focus on preparedness, to identify and mitigate the risks posed by natural disasters. This includes scaling up our planning, programming and decision-making mechanisms, as well as fostering sustainable solutions that reduce the impact of climate change while upholding the highest standards of integrity and transparency.

The second major challenge we face is the need to strengthen our cooperation and advocacy efforts on behalf of vulnerable communities and scale up our awareness-raising around the seven Fundamental Principles of the Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement.

Strengthening our cooperation with local communities, civil society organizations and governments, in addition to building strong partnerships, will help amplify the voices of vulnerable communities and pave the way for their engagement in decision-making processes. We will also need to scale up our advocacy efforts, using our influence and networks to promote policies and practices that uphold and promote the seven Fundamental Principles, which provide a framework for humanitarian action and help ensure our work is guided by core humanitarian values.

How can we further enhance this culture of humanitarian principles and values on which our Movement is based?

Again, we will need to invest in training and capacity-building for our staff and volunteers, to ensure they have the skills and knowledge required to promote the Movement's values and work effectively with local communities. We will also need to develop innovative approaches to communication and outreach, using social media, digital tools and other platforms to reach new audiences and raise awareness of the needs of vulnerable communities.

Lastly, we need to emphasize the importance of ensuring diligent documentation and archiving of the outcomes of our Movement's major conferences and meetings. It is our responsibility to find innovative ways to preserve historical records. Only then can we ensure that future generations can learn from past successes and challenges, and that our Movement remains responsive to the evolving needs of the communities it serves.

In conclusion, the challenges faced by the Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement in the coming years are multifaceted and complex, ranging from responding to natural disasters and health emergencies to advocating for the rights of vulnerable communities and promoting our Fundamental Principles. By working together and making the most of our collective strength, we can rise to these challenges and continue to make a real difference to the lives of millions of people around the world.



Opinion

Three Compass Points for Navigating Uncertainty

This is an extremely exciting time to be a humanitarian. Our world is facing not just one existential threat but several.

If Red Cross and Red Crescent people are motivated by a sense of urgency and a desire to save and protect human life, then this is an exceptional moment to be a member of the Movement. It is a time of impending universal emergency. No country and no National Society will be spared the climate-related disasters coming towards us, and new wars and pandemics may emerge alongside them.

The Standing Commission is right to acknowledge uncertainty as part of our operational reality. But we must never be paralysed by uncertainty. Instead, the Movement must advance towards uncertainty and work determinedly within it.

So, what reliable compass points can we use to navigate through uncertainty as we plan and respond to people's needs in the 2020s? There are three good ones, I think, that can help us find our way.

1. Some things are certain

We can start by recognizing that not everything is uncertain. In our age of "polycrisis", four key facts are quite clear.

- Climate change is already creating a dangerous new environment across the globe and will get much worse. But scientific predictions of the impacts of climate change are very good, and with the IFRC's excellent [Red Cross Red Crescent Climate Centre](#) lighting the path ahead, National Societies can use these predictions to prepare and plan their work. Humanitarian aid in the climate crisis will be constant. It requires the rapid development of new fields like anticipatory aid, heatwave and forest fire response, adaptation, relocation and more. Humanitarian action always evolves and it is the job of this generation to make it fit for the climate crisis.
- Militarism and a great power contest is certainly on the rise again and various geopolitical flashpoints could trigger global war. This gives the ICRC and National Societies a clear and urgent role to engage deeply with all major powers on the importance of IHL and work with them on new humanitarian norms. This is essential as states diversify their nuclear arsenals, expand their capacity in outer space and digital space, and develop

new AI-based weapons at a time when AI has reached such levels of sophistication that not even its inventors are sure about what will happen next.

- Geopolitics is breaking into blocs again. De-coupling and de-risking are the policies of the day in a resumed contest between major powers. While states return to blocs, the Movement must remain united in strong humanitarian cooperation and personal friendships between these blocs, so that humanity is strengthened in every political system.
- We know the catastrophic risk of new pandemics in humans and in nature is ever present. All National Societies must hold firm to the lessons of COVID-19 and remember them even when they are preoccupied with an increasing intensity of climate-related disasters.

This first compass point gets us to a realistic understanding of the world around us in which we have to operate.

2. Humanitarian know-how still applies

The second compass point gives us a direction for action. It points to the fact that there are important things we know and do already that guarantee we are moving in the right direction.

Humanitarian aid in the climate emergency of the 2020s can build on vital work by people who have developed disaster risk reduction (DRR) and disaster law. This is their time and DRR must now boom across the world. Alongside it, the Movement must also develop climate change adaptation (CCA) as a major new skill set. The whole Movement must live up to the Humanitarian Charter on Climate and Environment, agreed at its 2022 Council of Delegates ([Resolution 1](#)).

Many other things we know about humanitarian assessment, protection, social protection, digital payments, water and sanitation, family tracing, universal health care, resilience and much more, will also be valid in climate emergencies and any new big wars and pandemics. We can carry these operational certainties with us too, innovating and expanding as we go.

Everything we know about locally led humanitarian aid is also key to whatever comes at us. International agencies will not be able, or permitted, to meet all needs, and will often be the most expensive option. The Movement must do everything it can to scale up and enable national and local humanitarian capacity as the primary system of humanitarian response in the 2020s, or we stand no chance of creating resilient societies.

3. Personal conviction counts

The Movement's third compass point is its principles. Moral purpose and personal conviction are a clear guide in uncertainty. Even when we cannot know exactly what is coming round the corner, the Movement's commitment to the Fundamental Principles means it knows exactly what it wants to do in any situation.

It wants to strengthen humanity as a universal principle and work impartially, neutrally, independently, voluntarily, and as one, to protect life and health and ensure respect for the human person. This gives every Red Cross and Red Crescent staff member and volunteer an important moral certainty and operational readiness with which to start each new uncertain day.

By **Hugo Slim**

Hugo Slim is a senior research fellow at the Las Casas Institute of Social Justice at Blackfriars Hall at the University of Oxford where he is leading a research and advocacy project on the ethics and practice of humanitarian aid in the climate emergency. He has been an international adviser to the British Red Cross and Head of policy and humanitarian diplomacy at the ICRC.

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