

Bulletin

Letter from the Chair



Dear friends,

This year marks the 75th anniversary of the Geneva Conventions, but the ongoing armed conflicts – and the suffering they inflict – leave little cause for celebration. It is heartbreaking to witness the human cost of these conflicts, which violate the most basic rules of international humanitarian law and, above all, in which civilians are not protected. At the same time, climate change is producing natural disasters that affect millions of people and require more effective anticipation, preparedness, response and recovery measures.

I would like to say a word in honour of the Red Cross and Red Crescent volunteers and employees who in the last few months have lost their lives or been injured or traumatized while doing humanitarian work. The loss of life is always terrible, but it is especially painful when it happens to those who are doing everything to save others.

There are only four months to go until the 34th International Conference of the Red Cross and Red Crescent and the Council of Delegates, which take place in Geneva in October.

At its last meeting in March, the Standing Commission approved the provisional agendas and draft zero resolutions for both the International Conference and the Council of Delegates. It also adopted decisions related to major organizational and substantive issues. For now, there are five draft zero resolutions for the International Conference and seven draft zero resolutions for the Council of Delegates, as well as background reports and progress reports related to previously adopted resolutions.

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I would like to thank the people who have worked so hard to produce these documents, which have been shared with all members of the International Conference and Council of Delegates. We have begun a new phase of consultations that will allow us to finalize and send out the official working documents for these meetings in September.

The preparatory meeting for the 34th International Conference took place in Geneva on 6 and 7 May. Many state and Movement representatives took part in this important event.

The meeting took place in an atmosphere of respect and engagement, revealing how members view the International Conference as a unique platform for humanitarian dialogue. They showed they were committed to ensuring its success, especially in light of all the well-known challenges to multilateralism that we are facing.

I was particularly pleased to see governments frequently collaborating well with National Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies for joint presentations and speeches. We have spent months cultivating these relationships based on dialogue and cooperation, and I hope this will continue leading up to the International Conference.

In the Standing Commission, we have moved forward with discussions on the content and organization of the next statutory meetings and followed up on issues that affect the whole Movement, including the implementation of the Seville Agreement and the ongoing project to develop a "Movement Policy Framework". Furthermore,

we decided who will be the recipients of the Movement's highest Award, the Henry Dunant Medal. On behalf of the Standing Commission, I would like to congratulate the laureates who will be honoured at the next Council of Delegates in October 2024.

I would like to thank everyone who has submitted articles for this edition of the Bulletin, especially Michael Meyer of the British Red Cross for his piece on the unique features of the Movement and their enduring value.

I would also like to express, once again, my sincere thanks to the International Federation, the ICRC and the 63 National Societies that have generously contributed to the budget of the Standing Commission in 2023, your support means a lot.

Our commitment to principled humanitarian action is what unites all components of the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement. Let us value and safeguard this humanitarian mission as well as our efforts to find what unites us and thus bolsters our impact.

I would like to once again call upon all members of the International Conference to continue actively participating in the consultations that will be taking place until October. Let's work together to prepare this unique, neutral forum for humanitarian dialogue and build a solid consensus on our ambitious humanitarian goals.

Yours sincerely,
Mercedes Babé



Thank you for your contributions in 2023

Following the equitable one-third principle established by the 2007 Council of Delegates, the budget of the Standing Commission is jointly funded by the IFRC, the ICRC and the National Societies. The Standing Commission is fully aware of the financial and operational challenges faced by all components of the Movement as they carry out their respective missions. The Standing Commission also strives to fulfil its duties to the best of its ability at the service of the Movement.

The Standing Commission is deeply grateful to those who responded so generously to its call for contributions in 2023. Thank you so much for supporting our work! Our special thanks go to the IFRC, the ICRC and the 63 National Societies listed below for their kind contributions to the budget. We count on the continuation of such collaborative support in 2024, to which other National Societies are encouraged to join, in line with their resources.

Voluntary contributions were received in 2023 from the National Societies of the following countries:

- Albania
- Andorra
- Antigua and Barbuda
- Australia
- Austria
- Bahrain
- Bangladesh
- Belgium
- Bulgaria
- Cambodia
- Canada
- China
- Colombia
- Cook Islands
- Costa Rica
- Croatia
- Cyprus
- Czech Republic
- Dominica
- Ecuador
- Estonia
- Ethiopia
- Fiji
- Finland
- France
- Germany
- Greece
- Guinea
- Honduras
- Iraq
- Ireland
- Israel
- Italy
- Japan
- Jordan
- South Korea
- Kuwait
- Liechtenstein
- Luxembourg
- Mali
- Montenegro
- Netherlands
- New Zealand
- Nigeria,
- Norway
- Pakistan
- Palau
- Palestine
- Philippines
- Poland
- Qatar
- Romania
- Russia
- St Vincent and the Grenadines
- Serbia
- South Sudan
- Spain
- Sweden
- Switzerland
- Thailand
- Türkiye
- United Kingdom
- Zimbabwe

Henry Dunant Medal 2024

The Henry Dunant Medal is the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement's highest distinction. It recognizes and rewards outstanding services and acts of great devotion, mainly of international significance, to the Movement's mission by any of its individual members. The Standing Commission thanks all the nominating National Societies and their co-sponsors for submitting nominations and is pleased to announce this year's recipients of the Henry Dunant Medal, who will be honoured at the next Council of Delegates in October 2024.



Massimo Barra

Former member and chair of the Standing Commission, honorary president of the Italian Red Cross, honorary president of ERNA (European RC/RC Network on HIV/AIDS, tuberculosis, viral hepatitis and substance abuse)



A life-long volunteer within the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement, Massimo Barra has done pioneering work in the areas of public health and in humanitarian policies related to drug addiction, inspiring National Societies to follow his example. In 1976,

Mr Barra founded the Villa Maraini Drug Recovery Centre in Italy, becoming a leading expert worldwide on the recovery of people with drug disorders and related public health strategies. A committed promoter of peace and humanitarian dialogue, Mr Barra has done over 450 missions in 120 countries, including in highly sensitive contexts. He held a variety of high governance positions within his National Society, the IFRC and the Movement.

Dora Athalyne James

Director-general of the Saint Vincent and the Grenadines Red Cross



Ms Dora Athalyne James has served the Movement since she joined as a junior member when she was only ten years old. Throughout the years, Ms James has demonstrated her leadership at a national and regional level to help people in need, through the establishment and development of pre-school education services to children

and regional youth camp experiences, or through outreach programmes for the elderly and the most vulnerable. With a long-standing involvement in first aid and disaster management, in an environment prone to natural disasters, Ms James has unwaveringly led rescue and evacuation operations, including during the eruption of La Soufrière volcano, when she herself was among the evacuees. Ms James continues to serve her community, while fulfilling the role of director-general of her National Society on a volunteer basis.

Greg Vickery

Former national president of the Australian Red Cross, former member and chair of the Standing Commission



From a range of positions in the Australian Red Cross, the IFRC and the Movement since 1973, Mr Greg Vickery has made outstanding contributions to integrity, ethics and the good governance and functioning of the Movement. Mr Vickery's leadership and diplomatic skills

were instrumental in the creation of the Audit and Risks Committee of the IFRC, as well as significant reforms within the Australian Red Cross and the network of National Societies in the Pacific. He also made significant contributions to the development of National Societies in the Pacific region, leading the creation of the Pacific Governance Enhancement Group and giving this network greater international visibility and a stronger voice.

Margareta Wahlström

Founder of the GLOW Red network and chair of its Coordination Group, former president of the Swedish Red Cross



A driving force within the Movement, Margareta Wahlström has held various positions with the Swedish Red Cross, from desk officer to president, and with the IFRC, from desk officer to director and under-secretary-general. Throughout her career, she has been at the forefront of prominent

international operations and humanitarian diplomacy endeavours. Ms Wahlström is widely recognized as a leading figure and visionary advocate for gender equity and support for women leaders. Founder and leader of the Global Network for Women leaders in the Movement (GLOW Red), she has played an active, influential and decisive role in promoting women's participation in decision-making and their inclusion in the Movement's governing bodies and management positions.

34th International Conference and Council of Delegates 2024: Final phase

From consultations to working documents

Preparations for the 34th International Conference of the Red Cross and Red Crescent and the Council of Delegates 2024 are now in the final phase. The official working documents for the two statutory meetings of the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement will be sent to members by 12 September 2024. These will include the provisional consolidated draft agendas and programmes, draft resolutions, reports and validated candidacies for election to the Standing Commission.

Important dates

2024

12 September Dispatch of official working documents

27–28 October Council of Delegates

28–31 October 34th International Conference

Since the beginning of 2024, wide-ranging consultations with National Societies and states have taken place, including the sharing of documents and feedback, webinars, ambassadors' meetings, briefings with permanent missions in Geneva and missions of small states in New York. These consultations have enabled the Standing Commission to approve the initial provisional agendas, which were circulated with the **convocations on 9 April 2024**, and to consolidate the **draft zero resolutions**, which were released on the same date, with five draft zero resolutions for the 34th International Conference and seven for the Council of Delegates.

One key milestone was the organization of a **preparatory meeting in Geneva on 6 and 7 May 2024**. Open to all members of the International Conference, the meeting repeated the success of the preparatory meeting established by the Standing Commission in 2019.

The meeting was fruitful, enabling a large number of contributions to be made, and broad areas of agreement and issues to be identified and clarified relating to the draft zero resolutions, with a view to developing a consensus.

The Standing Commission is grateful to the members of the International Conference and the Council of Delegates for their valuable feedback on the draft zero resolutions, which will help draft resolutions to be further refined and issued in September 2024 as official working documents. At the same time, the organization of the 34th International Conference's **plenary commissions** is taking shape around the International Conference's three thematic pillars: Building a global culture of respect for international humanitarian law; Standing by our Fundamental Principles in responding to humanitarian needs and risks; Enabling sustainable, locally-led action. A substantial programme of **side events** is currently being finalized. Conference members continue to report on the implementation of the **pledges** they made in 2019 and have been invited to make new pledges for the next International Conference. Follow-up reports on resolutions from the 33rd International Conference and previous Council of Delegates are being prepared.

Important resources

34th International Conference

- [Documents](#) (including draft zero resolutions and background reports)
- [Pledges](#) (guidelines for pledging, reporting database)

Council of Delegates 2024

- [Documents](#) (including draft zero resolutions and background reports)

The Standing Commission is currently considering the submission of draft resolutions to the October 2024 statutory meetings on the following subjects.

34th International Conference

- Toward a universal culture of compliance with international humanitarian law
- Protecting civilians and other protected persons and objects against cyber and information operations during armed conflict
- Strengthening disaster risk governance through comprehensive disaster laws, policies and plans
Annex: Guidelines on Disaster Risk Governance
- Empowering local leadership, capacity and delivery in principled humanitarian action and strengthening resilience
- Protecting people from the humanitarian impacts of extreme climate and weather events: Working together to strengthen anticipatory action

2024 Council of Delegates

- Protection in the Movement: Improving our collective impact in protecting people
- Migration Strategy for the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement 2024–2030
- Weapons and international humanitarian law
- War in cities: A solemn appeal from the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement
- Call for respect and support for principled humanitarian action
- Extension until 2030 of the Restoring Family Links Strategy for the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement 2020–2025
- Reaffirming the role of the Movement as a factor of peace

The Standing Commission – together with the other organizers of the statutory meetings, the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) and the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC) – encourages all members and participants to

continue the high-quality engagement that has been seen so far during the preparations for the October 2024 meetings. We are counting on your support to foster productive humanitarian dialogue and ensure the full success of the meetings.

Election of Standing Commission members

The election of 5 members of the Standing Commission is scheduled to take place on 30 October 2024 during the 34th International Conference in Geneva.

Candidates must be members of a National Society of the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement, and are strongly encouraged to submit nominations to the Electoral Committee at least sixty days before the opening of the International Conference, i.e., by 29 August 2024.

Members of the Standing Commission are elected in a personal capacity. When electing the five members of the Standing Commission, members of the 34th International Conference are urged to take into

account the personal qualities and the principle of fair geographical distribution as well as equitable gender balance, notably by choosing at least two women and two men among the candidates.

Guidance and documents for candidates and the election are available on the web page of the 34th International Conference: [Election of the Standing Commission of the Red Cross and Red Crescent – Statutory Meetings \(rcrcconference.org\)](https://rcrcconference.org). Nominations must be submitted in one of the four working languages of the Conference and include all the following documents duly completed and signed:

- the **Nomination Form** for the 2024 election of the Standing Commission,
- the **Statement of candidacy** (Annex 1);
- the **Declaration of integrity** (Annex 2); and
- the **Membership and integrity attestation** established by the candidate's National Society (Annex 3).



Nomination forms and required documents must be submitted to the Electoral Committee:

By email to:
election@standcom.ch

or

By post to:
c/o Secretariat of the Standing Commission of the Red Cross and Red Crescent,
19 Avenue de la Paix, 1202 Geneva, Switzerland



Walk the talk: From resolutions to action

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.

“Reshaping urban landscapes: The power of community resilience”

Urban issues are not just about development; they are about survival and thriving in a rapidly changing world. Think about it: cities are like living organisms, constantly evolving and interconnected. When disasters strike, they hit the urban poor the hardest. Recent events, such as the climate-change induced floods that washed out Brazilian towns or the fires in South African townships, show the magnitude of the risks facing cities. But with our vast network and millions of volunteers, organizations like the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement can make a huge difference in reducing risks and boosting resilience right at the heart of urban centres.

In 2022 the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC) consolidated its institutional urban ambition – by signing the Council of Delegates resolution on [Strengthening the resilience of urban communities: Our way forward](#) – to bring the urban agenda to the forefront of our efforts, calling for increased investments in cities. The resolution advocates for scaling up urban services, risk reduction and social inclusion, and leveraging technology and partnerships for effective solutions. 2023 saw a Strategic Leadership Group being created to steer the work and define the tasks and deliverables – a set of “principles for action” – of five thematic working groups, which are currently being established. We invite all National Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies interested in this work to join one or more working groups.*

This is the time for innovation, collaboration and a fresh perspective that will shape and help us deliver on our urban ambitions. We need to let go of the old, siloed thinking and excel in communicating, collaborating and co-creating across sectors in order to tackle the urban challenges in front of us. Multi-year programmes, such as the Coastal Cities and Heat Action Programme (COCHAP), implemented in ten cities across four countries, aim to do

so by bringing together experts and stakeholders, assessing multiple risks that have compounding effects, building coalitions and finding holistic solutions to urban challenges.

Building resilience in urban communities does not follow a one-size-fits-all approach, but there are actionable steps we can take. Empowering citizens to identify and address risks in their neighbourhoods, advocating for smarter technologies and partnerships, and securing land tenure for improved infrastructure are key. National Societies play a vital role in this process, from setting up cooling centres to climate-proofing homes to withstand extreme heat and informing communities with early warning, early action protocols established to reduce flood damage or storm risks in vulnerable areas. By empowering communities and facilitating connections, we can drive change together. This approach has already led to significant reductions in the number of fires in Nairobi and to early detection of heatwaves in Dacca, saving lives and livelihoods.

Our collective core strength lies in our ability to accompany and empower communities, leveraging our experience and networks to drive positive change, and this resolution is a key step towards setting the course for our collective journey towards urban resilience.

By **Sandra D’Urzo**

Senior Officer, Urban Resilience and Settlements, IFRC
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**If your National Society is interested in knowing more about the work on defining the principles of action or you want to join the thematic working groups, please reach out to Ela Serdaroglu, urban resilience and settlements lead, at ela.serdaroglu@ifrc.org*

Standing Commission members' corner

A talk with Mr George Weber

George Weber has been an elected member and vice chair of the Standing Commission since 2015, and was its chair from 2017 to 2019.

Mr Weber brings to the commission a wealth of experience gained through his work in different positions and in different components of the Movement, spanning more than five decades, including as secretary-general/CEO of the Canadian Red Cross and secretary-general of the IFRC. In the latter capacity, Mr Weber was also an ex officio member of the Standing Commission from 1992 to 1999.



Mr Weber, you have an impressive record of more than 60 years in the Movement: as a youth volunteer, employee, and leader in your National Society and the IFRC, as well as 17 years as an ex officio and elected member of the Standing Commission. What a journey ...

What a journey indeed, and it has been both a privilege and an honour to have served in each of the roles along the way. Upon reflection, I realized I likely caught the Red Cross/Red Crescent bug in elementary school. In those days, learning about the Geneva Conventions was part of the curriculum. My first engagement as a youth volunteer

was selling Red Cross calendars in the post-Korean war era. Whether I knew it or not at the time, that involvement would inspire me for years to come. Volunteering was the starting point, followed by joining the staff, rising to leadership roles nationally and internationally and returning to volunteering again – a full circle.

The Movement's values – especially our Fundamental Principles – have fuelled my passion over the years. The good work done and the bad that has been prevented by Red Cross/Red Crescent personnel all over the world gives me energy. How can one not want to be a part of that?

Tell us about your experience as an ex officio member in the 1990s compared to now on the Standing Commission. What has evolved internationally and within the Movement over the past 30 years?

Regarding the international context, it's fair to say armed conflict has been a constant, but what has changed are the ways wars are being fought, sometimes with little or no regard for the Geneva Conventions. Consequently, this has led to a dramatic increase in both the relevancy and importance of international humanitarian law and the role of the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement.

We've also witnessed an evolution in the context of our work. Beyond armed conflict, climate change is, rightfully, at the forefront of all discussions and decisions. We have always had natural disasters, but their severity and frequency are unprecedented. The geopolitical landscape is shifting rapidly. We're still enduring the effects of COVID and know we must prepare for future health emergencies. We're living with greater inequality than ever. Populations are more educated and knowledgeable, but with that comes increased expectations on governments and institutions, including the Red Cross/Red Crescent. While digitalization was on the rise 30 years ago, and led to many advances, we have seen it become weaponized, with cyber security now a significant threat. This may be where we are headed with artificial intelligence.

In retrospect, things may have felt more stable 30 years ago, but change is a constant and the need to adapt and evolve is ever present. It has just become more challenging to do so given the pace of change.

What are the key challenges the Movement is currently facing, especially in view of the 34th International Conference?

For years now, we have seen a continuing erosion of trust in our traditional institutions. The exception is the trust people still hold for the Red Cross/Red Crescent, which is largely based on our integrity. Protecting that trust, particularly with governments and vulnerable populations, is imperative.

The International Conference is a unique forum where representatives from governments (state parties), National Societies, the ICRC and the IFRC come together in a safe space to address critical humanitarian issues with global impact. The importance of that safe space cannot be understated, given the number of wars and armed conflicts currently raging. Compounding that turmoil are the drivers noted above like climate change, along with increased migration and economic instability.

Do you have a message for future Standing Commission members?

The Standing Commission is an important Movement resource, although not always well understood. In addition to its role as trustee of the conference, it plays the vital role of ensuring harmony and cohesion between all Movement components, even though they are separate legal entities with occasional competing priorities. Members of the Standing Commission need to be role models for all Movement components and those who elect them. To do so, they must always be cognizant of their words and actions.

Our history and the solutions reached over the years – sometimes in particularly challenging contexts – offer important lessons. It's been said you don't live long enough to make all the mistakes yourself, so learn from the lessons of others. That is valuable advice for the Standing Commission – knowing where you came from and how you arrived at where you are now can inspire creative solutions to complex situations. We can do better by learning from the past, while living in the present and being hopeful for tomorrow.

After sixty years, I remain optimistic because I believe in the good of human nature, exemplified by our personnel who are doing extraordinary work – some putting themselves in harm's way with no thought of compensation beyond doing good for others. With continued integrity and care, the Movement will remain a powerful force for the next 30 years and beyond, whatever those years may bring our way.



Opinion

The enduring value of the Red Cross and Red Crescent's special features

In October of this year, the components of the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement and the States parties to the Geneva Conventions will once again come together at the International Conference of the Red Cross and Red Crescent. While the International Conference is always an important moment – and opportunity – in the Movement's calendar and in the humanitarian system, it takes on special significance in the current geopolitical situation.

At all times, but perhaps particularly now as we look to adopt meaningful resolutions at the 34th International Conference, it seems useful to consider the special features of the Red Cross and Red Crescent, and their continuing relevance.

The Fundamental Principles: These principles are the glue that keeps the Movement together. They provide the moral compass to guide our actions. There is the ever-present tension between solidarity and neutrality. We want to be there for people in need, but we recognize that, as a practical matter, our ability to help them depends on our neutrality.

The auxiliary role of National Societies: Partnership and cooperation are key in addressing the many challenges we face in each of our respective countries and beyond. Unlike other organisations who may advocate in a politicized way, where a trusting relationship exists, the National Society can act as a critical friend to government, working together to achieve common humanitarian ends. Based on a relationship of mutual respect and support, built over years, the National Society should be the civil society partner of choice for States in the humanitarian field.

The red cross and red crescent emblems: The emblems are visible signs of the neutral protection provided by the Geneva Conventions to authorized medical and religious personnel. They are the linchpin to the international rules that all States have agreed to respect during armed conflicts. The fact that, at times, those displaying the emblems have been attacked does not mean that military medical services and others should cease using them. Rather, we should redouble our efforts to prevent and address abuses. It is important too to explore the concept of a protective emblem for use in cyberspace.

International humanitarian law (IHL): The Geneva Conventions, 75 years old this year, represent universal values. Effective implementation at the national level is an essential building block for compliance. The connection between the Movement and modern IHL is unique, dating back to the origins of both. No other treaty has the same support which the Movement, with its large volunteer base, provides to the Geneva Conventions. IHL implementation is another area for State and National Society co-operation that can lead to improved humanitarian outcomes which are in the common interest.

Global and local: The Movement's network of National Societies is an established base for localisation. Its federated structure makes localisation easier to implement than for many NGOs and IGOs. It can also address and begin to rectify the inequalities of the past. Additionally, the Movement has the benefit of two international components. Working together, National Societies, the ICRC and the IFRC can bring the advantages of both local and global expertise and experience.

The special features of the Movement are relevant every day, providing challenges and opportunities. They are evident in the draft resolutions to be considered by the International Conference in October (the Conference itself being a unique forum, reflecting all the features mentioned). The Red Cross and Red Crescent should hold fast to its special identity and not deviate from being

who we are and what helps us to achieve our humanitarian mission. States and the Movement should use the International Conference to make the most of these special characteristics in addressing our shared challenges and in upholding our common humanity in the most constructive way.

Michael Meyer

Michael Meyer is Special Counsel, International Law at the British Red Cross. He has worked at the British National Society for over 40 years, providing and supervising advice and training on IHL and the Movement's special features. Mr. Meyer first attended the International Conference in 1995. He is a recipient of the Henry Dunant Medal and was recently appointed an Honorary King's Counsel

