STANDING COMMISSION OF THE RED CROSS AND RED CRESCENT

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Bulletin

Letter from the Chair



At the end of October, it will be two years since the 19th Session of the Standing Commission began its current term. It has been a period marked by immense humanitarian challenges, but also by the remarkable resilience, dedication and solidarity that define the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement.

Over these two years, the Standing Commission has worked to strengthen cooperation across the Movement and to advance issues that are important for our shared future. Among other priorities, it has continued to oversee the implementation of the Seville Agreement 2.0 and made significant progress in developing the Movement Policy Framework, which is an important step towards a coherent policy architecture that is more accessible and practical.

The Standing Commission has devoted considerable effort to the preparation of the Council of Delegates, which will convene in Geneva following the General Assembly of the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC). At its most recent meeting in September, the Commission approved the provisional agenda, draft resolutions and supporting documents that will guide our discussions.

Five draft resolutions, together with a number of background documents and progress reports relating to previously adopted resolutions, were shared with all Movement components on 16 October. I would like to express my sincere appreciation to everyone who contributed with their dedication and experience to preparing these important documents.

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Under the theme “United for Humanity,” the Council of Delegates will provide an opportunity to reflect on our future and reach consensus on the priorities that will guide our Movement in the years ahead. Drawing on our unique and complementary strengths, we will seek to enhance our collective effectiveness and maximize our humanitarian impact in the upcoming period.

The Movement’s highest distinctions – the Henry Dunant Medal and the Red Cross and Red Crescent Prize for Peace and Humanity – will be awarded at the Council of Delegates. I warmly congratulate this year’s recipients, whose dedication and service exemplify the very best of our Movement. I look forward to honouring them at the Statutory Meetings in December.

As we approach the Council of Delegates, I hope we will seize this moment not only to make decisions, but also to strengthen the bonds that unite us as a Movement. The challenges before us are significant, but so too is our capacity to respond to them together with determination and purpose.

I would like to pay tribute to the countless Red Cross and Red Crescent volunteers and staff who serve with courage, compassion and dedication day after day. I also wish to remember with deep respect those who have lost their lives while serving humanity. Their commitment continues to inspire us all.

Finally, I want to thank all those who contributed articles to this issue of the Bulletin. In particular, I am grateful to Dr Younis Al-Khatib, President of the Palestine Red Crescent Society, for sharing his valuable insights on the future of our Movement.

I look forward to seeing most of you in Geneva in December.

Mercedes Babé
Chair



Movement Awards 2026

The Standing Commission is pleased to announce that the Henry Dunant Medal will be awarded to two people at the 2026 Council of Delegates: Mr Milton Chaverri Soto from the Costa Rica Red Cross, and Ms Jumana Qwaider from the ICRC. The Henry Dunant Medal is the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement's highest distinction. It recognizes outstanding services and acts of great devotion, mainly of international significance, to the Movement's cause by its members.

The Standing Commission has also unanimously decided to award a Red Cross and Red Crescent Prize for Peace and Humanity this year – for just the fifth time since the prize's creation, and for the first time since 2019. It rewards outstanding contributions to respect for the Movement's motto, *Per Humanitatem ad Pacem* (Through Humanity to Peace), that is, to a more peaceful world through humanitarian work and promotion of the Movement's ideals. The recipient will be announced during the Movement Awards Ceremony on 3 December 2026, where the laureates of the Movement Family Links Medal will also be honoured.

The Standing Commission extends its most heartfelt congratulations to the laureates and thanks all the nominating Movement components for the high quality of their nominations.

Henry Dunant Medal laureates:



Milton Chaverri Soto
Costa Rica Red Cross



Jumana Qwaider
ICRC

35th International Conference and 2026 Council of Delegates

Final preparations for the 2026 Council of Delegates

We have reached a major milestone in the 14-month-long consultation process with National Societies: the publication on 16 October of the official working documents for the 2026 Council of Delegates, which include the provisional agenda, ten progress reports, the commission outline and the following five draft resolutions with their associated background documents:

- Principled and accountable use of information and communication technologies in humanitarian action
- Building the Movement's strategic and operational preparedness to address harmful information in humanitarian settings
- Strengthening the resilience of urban communities − Principles of Action
- Reinforcing the mandate and capacities of National Societies through strengthening their legal base
- Preserving humanity: Our collective efforts to uphold international humanitarian law

The 2026 Council of Delegates will be held on 3 and 4 December. In addition to the plenary sessions, it will feature a commission on the theme of "Addressing the present: Shaping the Movement of the future", six spotlight sessions, 12 side events, and dedicated networking spaces designed to provide attendees a comfortable environment to connect with each other.

There were additional webinars on 26 October and 2 November. The former focused on the agenda and program as well as the draft resolutions, and the latter on practical information on attending the Council of Delegates.

Please register your National Society's attendance no later than 15 November to help with the planning.

Walk the talk: From resolutions to action

In 2024, the 34th International Conference of the Red Cross and Red Crescent adopted six resolutions. The resolutions were supplemented by voluntary commitments from participants in the form of over 115 pledges. The Council of Delegates adopted nine resolutions in 2024 and 13 resolutions in 2022. The resolutions and pledges call for members of the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement to take action for humanity. This section highlights the progress they have made so far.

Per humanitatem ad pacem: Renewing the Movement's commitment to peace

The 2024 Council of Delegates adopted the resolution "Reaffirming the role of the Movement as a factor of peace", renewing the Movement's commitment to preventing and resolving conflict and contributing to sustainable peace. Against a backdrop of expanding conflict, polarization and humanitarian needs, the resolution highlights how the Movement's everyday humanitarian work can lay the foundations for peace. By protecting human dignity, strengthening community resilience, fostering dialogue and promoting inclusion, Movement components can build trust, bridge divides and support peaceful coexistence.

Since the resolution's adoption, research and influencing efforts have further explored how humanitarian action can contribute to peace. In November 2025, for example, the IFRC and the Norwegian Red Cross organized a **Movement Symposium on Peace** in Geneva, bringing together Movement components and external partners to share experiences, showcase good practices and explore how the Movement can strengthen its contribution to peace. One project presented there was the ICRC's recently published report ***Through Humanity to Peace***, which draws on operational research in three countries, alongside historical and social science research, to examine how humanitarian actors can contribute to prospects for peace. The report is being used to encourage States to reinvest in conflict prevention and resolution, while helping humanitarian actors better understand their contributions to peace and develop informed partnerships with peace actors.

To advance the IFRC's peace commitments, **Generation Peace** was launched as a framework for combining young people's energy and innovation with older volunteers' experience through intergenerational dialogue and community-led action. The IFRC's flagship global initiative, **Light in the Darkness**, launched in June 2026, mobilizes people of all generations around a shared vision of peace, humanity and dignity. Through storytelling, community activities, digital engagement and advocacy, it connects local peace-building initiatives, amplifies community voices and transforms individual acts of hope into collective action.

Further details on these and other initiatives are available in the progress report on "Reaffirming the role of the Movement as a factor of peace".

By **Bhupinder Tomar**
Director, National Society Development, IFRC

And

Ariana Lopes Morey
Senior Policy Advisor, ICRC

Making the most of resolutions, now and in the future

Resolutions are highly valued as reference documents but only occasionally, rather than systemically, implemented, based on findings by the Standing Commission. To make resolutions more accessible and navigable, a project team under the Movement Policy Framework has been creating a centralized, searchable, multilingual digital repository for Movement decisions.

Movement Policy Framework

The project grew out of Resolution 9 of the 2024 Council of Delegates, which "notes with satisfaction the Standing Commission's initiative to provide Movement-wide guidance for the development and life cycle of resolutions and policies", "encourages the Standing Commission to continue the development of a Movement policy framework" and "invites the Standing Commission to present the Movement policy framework to the 2026 Council of Delegates".

Findings from consultations

The project team conducted global consultations, which included a questionnaire with over 100 responses from National Societies, the ICRC, and the IFRC; meetings of a reference group composed of National Society representatives; and interviews with interested parties. They identified the following key challenges:

- difficulties in locating documents and navigating complex terminology
- uncertainty regarding the validity and status of various resolutions
- a lack of monitoring mechanisms to track implementation progress
- fragmentation, as tracking currently relies on individual focal points rather than centralized institutional systems.

Key achievements and next steps

The Online Platform on Movement Decisions is being developed in partnership with the ICRC's Safeguarding Archives Programme, which ensures its sustainability and provides institutional ownership. National Societies can try out the platform and provide feedback during the Council of Delegates side event "From policy to action: Making the most of Movement resolutions". The side event is also an opportunity to share experiences on implementing resolutions and contribute to reflections on the direction of the Movement Policy Framework initiative and related tools.

The working group that oversees the project, chaired by Dr Helen Durham, an elected member of the Standing Commission, will continue developing ways to help National Societies find, understand, interpret and apply Movement decisions in practice. The group will also examine the processes around how policies are developed, implemented, reviewed and maintained.

By **Margareta Ottosson**
Swedish Red Cross
MPF Project Manager

Want to learn more about the MPF initiative?
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Standing Commission members' corner

A talk with Dr Helen Durham

Dr Helen Durham AO was elected to the Standing Commission by the 34th International Conference in October 2024. She is a humanitarian leader, international lawyer, policy and diplomatic adviser and the CEO of RedR Australia. From 2014 to 2022, she was Director of International Law and Policy at the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC). She has 30 years of experience in the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement, having held various roles with Australian Red Cross, including Director of International Law and Strategy and National Manager of International Humanitarian Law (IHL), and conducted field missions for the ICRC globally. Helen has a PhD in IHL and is a Professorial Fellow at Melbourne Law School.



What inspired you to run for the Standing Commission?

I have a deep love of the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement and have been attending the Statutory Meetings for over 30 years, first as a youth representative for Australian Red Cross (ARC), then as a manager of IHL and an ICRC regional legal adviser and, finally, in senior roles with both ARC and the ICRC, including Director of International Law and Policy. Over this time, I have seen the impact of these amazing meetings, when we come together to ensure our Movement focuses on the most important issues of humanitarian concern. I have been fortunate to work with so many National Societies from across the globe and witness the incredible difference their activities make in people's lives. Bound together by the Fundamental Principles, which are under pressure today, the Movement is as precious as ever. As an ARC member and volunteer, the idea of being able to contribute to the unique body that is the Standing Commission, to share my experiences and knowledge and to learn from my colleagues was very inspiring. Being the only permanent forum where we all come together puts a responsibility on us to make the most of the time we have to connect and ensure we deliver practical outcomes that support the Statutory Meetings and strengthen the harmony of the Movement.

What are the two or three matters discussed or decisions taken at Statutory Meetings that have impressed you the most and that you think have had an impact on the Movement?

Over the years, there have been so many matters discussed and decisions taken at the Council of Delegates and the International Conference that have consequences today and shape who we are and what we stand for. I am excited about the upcoming 2026 Council of Delegates dealing with increasingly pressing problems such as mis/disinformation as well as the structural importance of National Societies having a strong legal framework. Previous Statutory Meetings have provided such a wealth of guidance, regulations and information on the use of the emblems that are key to our work and save lives when respected. The Fundamental Principles themselves were formally adopted from meetings in the 1960s and are at the heart of our daily work today. As someone who is passionate about IHL, the Statutory Meetings are critical and inspirational. For decades, they have dealt with numerous topics, from the need to "bring IHL home" to obligations around protecting health care in danger, the missing and family tracing. Issues relating to unacceptable weapons were discussed in 1948, 1952 and 1981, leading up to specific Council of Delegates resolutions on working towards the elimination of nuclear weapons in 2011 and beyond. The Statutory Meetings are such a great opportunity for the Movement to raise its voice and set out a vision for a world that is safer and kinder for all.

Which specific areas do you believe should be prioritized at the Movement level in order to enhance unity, preparedness, effectiveness and relevance in responding to today's global challenges?

We need to keep coming back to the Fundamental Principles and find ways to ensure everyone understands them and also lives by them. We need to keep focus on the fact that governments and authorities should let us safely do our work, be that in an armed conflict, a disaster or within communities who have needs we can address. I really think that we do not practically use the valuable decisions and outcomes we create at our Statutory Meetings enough, and for many National Societies, it is about ensuring there is easy and equitable access to the documents. This is why I am excited about the Movement Policy Framework (MPF) and the platform we will launch in December. Finally, we need to ensure we have more equality in the Movement and support our colleagues in National Societies from different regions to be engaged and involved in decision-making at all levels. Our genuine global reach is critical, and our capacity to work together for humanity is truly awesome.

Opinion

A vision for the Red Cross and Red Crescent at a turning point

This year's statutory meetings – the IFRC General Assembly and the Council of Delegates – come at a defining moment for our Movement. More than 130 armed conflicts are taking place around the world, and natural disasters are becoming more frequent and more devastating.

At the same time, the humanitarian and development systems are facing an existential crisis. The international environment is changing rapidly, and the rules and institutions that have underpinned the world order are being undermined, including the humanitarian principles and international humanitarian law. I believe that our Movement is facing one of the most consequential periods since the Second World War.

These changes are not abstract political developments. They are already having profound consequences on our work and our resources, on the safety and protection of Red Cross and Red Crescent volunteers and staff, on the humanitarian space in which our National Societies operate, and ultimately on our ability to reach and protect people affected by conflicts, disasters and other crises.
The Movement brings together 193 components – 191 National Societies, the ICRC and the IFRC – each with its own mandate, history, experience and reality. Yet the challenges we face today do not stop at national borders. What happens in one part of the world increasingly affects us all, particularly in an age of widespread harmful disinformation. We therefore need a strategic vision that can help us see our different realities as part of a common humanitarian challenge − and turn that understanding into collective action.

We must understand geopolitics without becoming political

I've been working in a context where the limits of the humanitarian system are being tested every day. That experience has taught me something simple but important: **we cannot protect humanitarian action by standing apart from the realities that threaten it. We must understand geopolitics without becoming political.**

Our Movement must remain independent, neutral and impartial. These principles are not negotiable. But neutrality must never mean disengagement, and independence must never mean isolation.

We need a Movement that understands where political decisions are being made, how those decisions affect humanitarian action, and when the Movement must speak, engage and defend humanitarian space.

From my own recent experience, I have learned the hard way that geopolitical developments affect the humanitarian operating environment and the ability to reach those who need assistance, as well as the protection of our volunteers and staff and the overall respect for IHL.

That is why we should engage with governments, international institutions and others with influence – and keep up that engagement on a regular basis – not to become political, but to ensure that humanitarian principles remain respected and humanitarian action remains possible.

Neutrality cannot mean silence in the face of attacks

There is another issue on which I believe our Movement needs greater courage. When our volunteers and staff are killed, when our facilities are attacked, or when our humanitarian access is denied, the Movement cannot respond as though these are isolated incidents concerning only one National Society. They concern all of us.

Our Movement should speak with one voice in demanding accountability for attacks against our humanitarian personnel and our facilities. Neutrality does not require us to be silent about violations of international humanitarian law. On the contrary, our principles have meaning only if we are prepared to defend them when they are tested.

Accountability is therefore not separate from humanitarian action. It is part of protecting the future of humanitarian action itself.

We need a strategic vision that prepares the Movement for what is coming

The pressures on the humanitarian system are no longer temporary or isolated. Humanitarian access is becoming more difficult. Attacks against humanitarian personnel are increasing. Funding is under pressure. The needs of affected populations continue to grow, while the ability of humanitarian organizations to respond is being constrained.

We must be prepared to anticipate change, prepare for difficult choices and find practical ways of strengthening the Movement before the next crisis arrives. This will require political awareness, strategic thinking and, above all, the willingness to have honest conversations about where our current approaches are no longer sufficient.

National Societies are the strength of the Movement and the IFRC

I have always believed that the greatest strength of the Movement lies in drawing on the capacities of its National Societies: listening to each other, understanding different realities, respecting each other's independence and diversity while finding the common ground that allows us to act together. And sometimes it means having difficult conversations.

This belief is one reason why the Palestine Red Crescent Society launched the **Humanitarian Leadership Round Table initiative**. We wanted to create a space where National Societies could speak openly about the changes taking place around us, listen to one another and consider together what those changes mean for our Movement and its future.

I believe this kind of dialogue must continue. We should build on it with our partners as we prepare for the next International Conference and address the wider questions facing our Movement.

Leaders for a Movement at a turning point

I do not believe the Movement should continue with business as usual. It needs to anticipate better and be prepared to listen. It needs to engage and to act. It needs a vision that can defend our principles without becoming trapped by old assumptions about how the world works.

Our strength comes from bringing different experiences together and finding the courage to act collectively when the circumstances demand it.

I believe that leading the Movement is not simply about protocol representation and delivering speeches. It is about helping the Movement find its voice, protect its humanitarian space and prepare for the world that is emerging around us through regular, active engagement.

So ask yourself, what kind of leadership does our Movement need now – and what must we do together to ensure that the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement remains capable of serving humanity in the future?



by **Younis Al Khatib**

Dr Younis Al Khatib has been the president of the Palestine Red Crescent Society since 2000. He started out as a volunteer in 1982 and has held numerous senior positions within the organization. Dr Al Khatib has also participated in a number of international missions with the Movement and was a member of the IFRC Governing Board from 2017 to 2022.