



## Our world. Your move.

31<sup>st</sup> International Conference of the Red Cross Red Crescent  
Geneva, 28 November–1 December 2011– For humanity



### Daily bulletin / N°1

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#### Welcoming the world to the International Conference

The presidents of the ICRC and IFRC, Jakob Kellenberger and Tadateru Konoé, warmly welcomed 1,714 delegates from around the world to the 31<sup>st</sup> International Conference on Monday. Both leaders acknowledged the changing nature of humanitarian response, affirmed the value of the Fundamental Principles, and emphasized the importance of addressing the main themes of the IC including strengthening IHL and disaster laws. “Declarations of intent will never be sufficient to save lives and protect human dignity,” stated Kellenberger in his speech. Konoé continued in his plenary address: “No government, no matter how strong, can hope to do everything. By strengthening its National Society, a government can make use of the resources mobilized by that Society so that more can be achieved, particularly in support of marginalized groups that can be difficult to reach through official means.”

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#### Keynotes highlight the transformative power of humanitarian action

“My name is Najmuddin Helal and I am one of thousands of Afghans who have lost a leg to a landmine.” Thus began the first keynote speaker to address the 31<sup>st</sup> International Conference as he spoke of his personal journey: from young man whose injury at age 18 threatened all hope of a normal life, to his work today as head of an ICRC orthopaedic center in Kabul. The second keynote speaker, Olivier Haringangi, volunteer youth coordinator for the Burundi Red Cross, spoke of the transformative power of volunteerism. “I became a volunteer while the country experienced its most violent social and political crisis,” said Haringangi, adding that the volunteer spirit helped rebuild his National Society and his nation’s solidarity after years of civil war.

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#### Artistic performances a highlight of the opening ceremony

The opening ceremony of the 31<sup>st</sup> International Conference started with a musical performance by 25 members of the Alphorn Academy of Switzerland, followed by an interpretative ballet performance of the seven Fundamental Principles by dynamic young dancers from the Rudra Béjart School. The latter included the Fundamental Principles being expressed not only through dance, but also in 14 different languages. For the first time ever, the opening ceremony was live streamed online so members of the Movement worldwide could join in the celebration.

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*In support of a greener conference, the Daily Bulletin has been reduced to two pages, with fewer photos to reduce paper and ink consumption. To supplement this and the Video Daily Bulletin, photo galleries and additional information are available on the conference website.*

## Youth as drivers of non-violence and peace

A side event yesterday encouraged participants to sign a pledge committing to the promotion of a culture of non-violence and peace through skills and values-based education. Speaking at the workshop, René Fasel of the International Olympic Committee said: “Sport is a powerful way to disseminate values to young people.” Alongside sport, music and art were proposed as effective ways to reach youth. Charlotte Tocchio, a youth trainer, said that the process of making art and generating new ideas and inspiration is as valuable as the end product. Chairing the session, IFRC vice president Jaslin Salmon, of the Jamaican Red Cross, said that the energy of young people must be harnessed to create a culture of non-violence and peace.

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## Strengthening IHL

Philip Spoerri, director of the ICRC's Law and Cooperation Department, kicked off the afternoon plenary on strengthening IHL. He outlined ICRC's report drafted in the lead up to the conference. “IHL can respond to the challenges of armed conflict and propose legal solutions that will really make a difference to victims of armed conflict,” said Spoerri. In the subsequent debate, over 35 delegates from National Societies and states took the floor, most expressing support for and agreement with the ICRC study. Some delegations underlined that IHL does not lack rules, but compliance and implementation mechanisms. Others pointed to perceived gaps in the current IHL texts.

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## Volunteers in action

Marie Yolande Bidi and Nobuko Nitta are among 265 volunteers who have worked more than 8,500 hours to provide vital support to delegates at the 2011 statutory meetings. Marie previously worked with the Red Cross Society of Côte d'Ivoire and knows the Movement well. Her colleague Nobuko is new to the Movement, and is using her skills in English and Japanese to serve a wide range of needs among delegation members. Volunteering for her National Society, the Bahrain Red Crescent Society, Maryam Meer is promoting their work in the exhibitions section of the Humanitarian Village. “We are a small country, and poverty is not widespread, but it does exist,” Maryam explains.

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## The Pulse

Throughout the course of the statutory meetings, our communication team has been engaging online communities via social media. One of the questions we asked young people was what they thought most contributes to violence among youth. The top response was: unemployment, lack of self-esteem and purpose, chosen by 40 per cent of respondents. Other popular responses were: drugs and alcohol, education not based on values and racial tension and discrimination.

**Practical Information:** Don't forget to pick up your tickets from the ticket booth (located near the information desk) for the renowned Roppongi Men's Chorus Club performance tonight. Buses will depart the conference centre at 7:00 pm to Victoria Hall.