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For information

**COUNCIL OF DELEGATES  
OF THE INTERNATIONAL RED CROSS  
AND RED CRESCENT MOVEMENT**

Geneva, Switzerland  
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**Work of the Standing Commission**

**Progress report**

**Document prepared by  
the Standing Commission of the Red Cross and Red Crescent**

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## Executive summary

The rolling work plan of the Standing Commission of the Red Cross and Red Crescent (Standing Commission) has two parts: *core activities*, deriving from its statutory mandate, and *other activities*, which are mostly undertaken in response to decisions of the Council of Delegates or the International Conference of the Red Cross and Red Crescent (International Conference), but also initiatives taken by the Standing Commission itself.

With regard to core activities, the Standing Commission has focused on “modernization” of the manner in which the Council of Delegates and the International Conference conduct their business.

The Standing Commission has emphasized the importance of improving the “choreography” of the International Conference to make it a more attractive event while retaining its important role as a leading forum for international humanitarian debate. This has been realized through the “Humanitarian Dialogue” conducted online and in five meetings in different parts of the world to canvass issues of concern to National Societies and the communities they work in. This has been part of our pre-Conference global engagement strategy. A more open International Conference has been achieved, largely, through the Voices to Action outreach campaign, which aims to bring the voices of those we serve into the Conference room. Another factor in achieving more openness was the decision to make the group of ambassadors an open-ended one. In the same spirit, an event was organized in New York for Permanent Missions of States not represented in Geneva. Work is ongoing on how the Movement can work better with small States and their National Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (National Societies) in the lead-up to global meetings.

An important function of the Standing Commission is to promote the implementation of decisions by the Council of Delegates and the International Conference. In the last two years, the Standing Commission has worked on implementation of Resolution 2 of the 2013 Council of Delegates and has submitted a draft Vision for the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement (Movement) to the Council of Delegates for adoption.

Other important resolutions have been those relating to Movement fora and to strengthening Movement coordination and cooperation and, not least, monitoring the implementation of the Memorandum of Understanding between the Magen David Adom and the Palestine Red Crescent Society. This is dealt with separately by the Council of Delegates.

Another activity of the Standing Commission is to identify individuals to be honoured by awarding them the Henry Dunant Medal. Five individuals were honoured in 2013 and four in 2015.

With regard to “harmony in the Movement,” representatives of the Standing Commission have been called upon to look into, advise on, and help deal with issues that have posed challenges in terms of maintaining harmonious relations among Movement components.

Whenever possible, the Standing Commission arranges for its meetings to be held immediately before or after other Movement events, such as regional conferences. This allows the members of the Standing Commission to listen to the voices of National Societies, and to share with them its latest thinking on how to improve the effectiveness of our global meetings.

On a practical level, the Standing Commission website has been updated, especially with regard to its visual appearance, and the International Conference website has been completely overhauled to make it a “one-stop shop” for the statutory meetings. The Secretariat of the Standing Commission remains unchanged.

## 1. Introduction

The 31st International Conference of the Red Cross and Red Crescent (International Conference), held in Geneva in November 2011, elected the 16th Standing Commission of the Red Cross and Red Crescent (Standing Commission).

The members of the Standing Commission since then have been:

- Elected *ad personam*:

Dr Massimo Barra (Italy)  
 Mr Steve Carr (United States of America)  
 Dr Mohammed Al-Hadid (Jordan)  
 Min (Hon) Pär Stenbäck (Finland)  
 Mr Greg Vickery (Australia)

- *Ex officio* members:

- International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC):

Until July 2012:	Dr Jakob Kellenberger, President
From July 2012:	Mr Peter Maurer, President
Until August 2014:	Dr Philip Spoerri, Director, International Law and Cooperation within the Movement
From September 2014:	Mr Balthasar Staehelin, Deputy Director-General

- International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (International Federation):

	Mr Tadateru Konoé, President
Until June 2014:	Mr Bekele Geleta, Secretary General
From August 2014:	Mr ElHadj As Sy, Secretary General

The Standing Commission was constituted with Mr Greg Vickery (Australia) as chairman and Mr Steve Carr (United States of America) as vice chairman.

## 2. Role and tasks of the Standing Commission

The Standing Commission is the trustee of the International Conference between two Conferences.<sup>1</sup> The role and tasks of the Standing Commission are derived from Article 18 of the Statutes of the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement (Movement).<sup>2</sup>

The Standing Commission has an important formal role to play in the preparations for the Council of Delegates and the International Conference. As the only permanent body of the Movement, it is a forum for reflecting on and developing issues of Movement-wide significance, and it has a role in settling differences of opinion, promoting harmony in the Movement, and promoting the implementation of decisions of the International Conference.

<sup>1</sup> See Statutes of the Movement, Article 16, available at: <http://redcross.web-developer.hu/download/statues/Statutes-EN-A5.pdf>

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.* Article 18.

In carrying out its functions, the Standing Commission consults extensively with both the International Federation and the ICRC, and with National Societies across the world.

### **3. Work of the Standing Commission since the 2013 Council of Delegates**

The Standing Commission has met six times since the Council of Delegates in 2013.

Its work is based on a plan of two parts: *core activities*, primarily those relating to the statutory role of the Standing Commission; and *other activities*, which are mostly undertaken in response to decisions of the Council of Delegates or the International Conference, but also initiatives that it takes itself. Finally, and by definition not part of the work plan, there are activities undertaken in response to unforeseen circumstances that arise between meetings of the Council of Delegates.

The two-year work plan is accompanied by a two-year budget, which is the joint financial responsibility of the International Federation, the ICRC and the National Societies, on the basis of one third each, with the National Society contributions continuing on a voluntary basis.<sup>3</sup>

#### **3.1. Core activities**

##### **Preparation of statutory meetings**

At its first meeting in 2014, the Standing Commission reviewed the Council of Delegates meeting in Sydney in November 2013, including the features that had been introduced for the first time, such as the joint opening of the Council of Delegates and the General Assembly of the International Federation.

Overall, the Standing Commission felt that, as an *event*, the Council of Delegates had been a success, and that the ideas put forward by its Working Group on Movement Fora should be incorporated into future preparations for both the Council of Delegates and the International Conference. It was noted that the number of youth taking the floor on behalf of their National Societies, and the quality of their interventions, had been impressive. It was agreed that youth participation should be promoted even further in the future, preferably as a regular part of the preparatory process. One aspect that the Standing Commission felt could be further improved was the visibility of the Council of Delegates in terms of media coverage and public awareness.

The main task of the Standing Commission in the last two years has been the preparations for the 32nd International Conference. In its deliberations on this the Commission has largely drawn on the report from the Working Group on Movement Fora, which is a rich source of insights and ideas for improvement.

At an early stage, the Standing Commission decided that the 50th anniversary of the proclamation of the Fundamental Principles of the Movement made it natural to give the Principles ample space at the International Conference, and that the overarching theme for the Conference should be related to the Principles.

With regard to the agenda, the Standing Commission decided it must be an agenda that was meaningful for all members of the International Conference, as well as for a wider humanitarian audience.

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<sup>3</sup> See Resolution 1 of the 2007 Council of Delegates, available at: [www.icrc.org/eng/resources/documents/resolution/council-delegates-resolution-1-2007.htm](http://www.icrc.org/eng/resources/documents/resolution/council-delegates-resolution-1-2007.htm)

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The Standing Commission emphasized the importance of improving the “choreography” and organization of the International Conference to make it a more attractive event while retaining its important role as a leading forum for international humanitarian debate.

It also stressed its wish for the International Conference to be more open, both to the media and in terms of public visibility.

With the practical organization of the International Conference managed jointly by the ICRC and the International Federation, the Standing Commission monitored progress through regular feedback from the Joint Organizing Committee at each of its meetings.

The ambition to initiate the preparations for the International Conference began with the circulation of the *Concept Note* dated 26 November 2014 – a description of the initial thinking around the topics for the Conference and its organization, including the preparatory process.

This included the suggestion for a “Global Engagement Initiative” that has, subsequently, been realized in the [Voices to Action](#) initiative. Through a combination of events around the world and a web-based invitation to express views and priorities on humanitarian matters from a community level, these voices will feed into the International Conference through the “Humanitarian Dialogue” and side events.

The Humanitarian Dialogue is a new feature of the International Conference and is meant to provide space for an open debate on humanitarian issues. It is a response to the criticism that debates at the International Conference are too stiff, too predictable, and too much based on written statements, which reduces the scope for any real exchange of opinion and experience. The discussions in the Humanitarian Dialogue are not meant to lead to decisions or recommendations from the International Conference, but to produce ideas and insights that will be made available to all members of the International Conference for their own future use, and will be an important part of developing agendas for the Council of Delegates in 2017 and the 33rd International Conference in 2019.

Following the circulation of the *Concept Note*, the customary group of ambassadors that advises on issues related to the International Conference was invited to meet on 26 January 2015. A significant change from the practice in previous years is that this group of ambassadors is now “open-ended,” that is, invitations are sent to *all* Permanent Missions in Geneva.

Following its meeting in Houston the Standing Commission, in cooperation with the ICRC and the International Federation’s Permanent Observer Missions, organized a meeting in New York with Permanent Missions of countries that are not represented in Geneva in order to update them on the preparations for the International Conference.

A second meeting with the group of ambassadors took place on 3 June 2015, and a third on 16 September 2015. Both were well attended.

### **Implementation of resolutions**

The Standing Commission is instructed by the Statutes of the Movement “to encourage and further the implementation of resolutions of the International Conference.”<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> See Statutes of the Movement, Article 18.3(b), available at: <http://redcross.web-developer.hu/download/statues/Statutes-EN-A5.pdf>

Resolution 2 of the 2009 Council of Delegates called “on the International Federation and the ICRC, to enhance their monitoring mechanisms, involving their regional structures, for improved feedback from National Societies on the implementation of resolutions adopted by this Council and coming statutory meetings and to share the findings with the Standing Commission.”

Progress was made on this at the 2013 Council of Delegates and, building on that experience, the evaluations ahead of the Council of Delegates and the International Conference in 2015 were initiated well in advance.

### **Resolution 2                    Strategy for the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement**

Through Resolution 2, the Council of Delegates in 2013 endorsed the view of the Standing Commission that the Strategy for the Movement had been, substantially, implemented.

It also asked “the Standing Commission, in consultation with National Societies, the International Federation and the ICRC, to continue developing a new Strategy for the Movement, on the basis of considerations set out in the Standing Commission report and in Annex 1 to this resolution, “New Directions for the Movement,” with a view to developing a new Strategy for the Movement for adoption at the 2015 Council of Delegates.”

The Standing Commission, revisiting this issue on a number of occasions, further refined the thinking around this, and concluded that rather than a *strategy* it would prefer a *vision* for the Movement: short and concise. The resultant vision document is being submitted to the 2015 Council of Delegates, separately from this report.

It should be noted that the impact of the Strategy for the Movement has been substantial not only in terms of direct action, but also in terms of shaping the way some of the core ideas, such as cooperation with the Movement, the visibility and image of the Movement, and strengthening individual components, have become subject to other processes involving the ICRC, the International Federation and National Societies.

### **Resolution 3                    Strategy for the Movement: Movement Fora**

The Council of Delegates noted with appreciation the report of the Working Group on Movement Fora, and urged the Standing Commission to continue to explore ways and means to improve the effectiveness and impact of the statutory meetings. It encouraged the Standing Commission to implement changes in this direction, insofar as its mandate allowed, and welcomed the organization of the joint opening session.

In practice, the Standing Commission has continued to discuss aspects of these issues at each of its meetings, but also decided to establish a small advisory group to expand the number of perspectives available.

Mr Steve Carr, who had chaired the Working Group on Movement Fora, was invited to chair the Advisory Group, and Dr Massimo Barra, member of the Standing Commission, was asked to join it. It was decided to invite some National Societies to nominate members, in addition to representatives of the ICRC and the International

Federation. Finally, the Commissioner for the International Conference was invited to join.

The Advisory Group eventually consisted of:

- Ms Ashanta Osborne – Guyana Red Cross
- Dr Yaseen Abbas – Iraqi Red Crescent
- Mr Greg Vickery – Observer, Standing Commission
- Mr Ibrahim Osman – Facilitator
- Ms Joëlle Tanguy – International Federation
- Dr Massimo Barra – Standing Commission
- Mr Nicolas Lang – Commissioner for the International Conference
- Dr Philip Spoerri – ICRC
- Mr Steve Carr – Chairman, Standing Commission
- Ms Susan Johnsen – Canadian Red Cross

The Advisory Group, which met several times, played an important role in developing the concept for the organization of the International Conference and had a significant impact on its final format.

#### **Resolution 4                      Strengthening Movement coordination and cooperation**

The Standing Commission has had the issue on its agenda at each of its meetings and has received updates on progress from the ICRC and the International Federation on each occasion.

#### **Resolution 5                      Implementation of the Memorandum of Understanding and Agreement on Operational Arrangements, dated 28 November 2005, between the Palestine Red Crescent Society and Magen David Adom in Israel**

At a meeting of the Standing Commission in Sydney on the eve of the Council of Delegates, the Commission received a report from the independent monitor. It noted that the mandate of the independent monitor would end with the closing of the Council of Delegates.

The Standing Commission decided that it would lead the monitoring process and continue to follow the implementation of the Memorandum of Understanding (MoU).

At the first meeting of the Standing Commission after the 2013 Council of Delegates, the Standing Commission reaffirmed its decision and decided that Min (Hon) Pär Stenbäck, the former independent monitor and member of the Standing Commission, and Dr Mohammed Al-Hadid, member of the Standing Commission, should act on its behalf in these matters.

At its eighth meeting, in June 2014, the Standing Commission received an update from Mr Stenbäck in his role as one of the Standing Commission representatives on the issue of monitoring the implementation of the MoU. The Standing Commission decided that a set of terms of reference should be developed and asked the ICRC and the International Federation to produce a draft. The Standing Commission also agreed that the field verification of the implementation of the MoU should be carried out by the ICRC and the International Federation and that it would present a report on the efforts to the International Conference.

At the following meeting, the Standing Commission received a briefing from its member, Dr Mohammed Al-Hadid, on his recent monitoring visit to Israel and Palestine. The Standing Commission was requested to write a letter to Magen David Adom in Israel to support it in its discussions with the Government of Israel.

At its first meeting in 2015, the Standing Commission received further feedback from Dr Mohammed Al-Hadid and Mr Pär Stenbäck, and decided that they should continue their efforts, including visits to the area, with support from the ICRC and the International Federation.

When the Standing Commission met again in May 2015, the feedback was less positive, and it was decided to make a high-level intervention with the Government of Israel to promote the full implementation of the Memorandum of Understanding between Magen David Adom and the Palestine Red Crescent Society. This eventually took the form of a joint letter signed by the ICRC and the International Federation.

### **3.2. Other activities**

#### **Henry Dunant Medal**

In accordance with the criteria for awarding the Henry Dunant Medal, adopted by the Standing Commission in 1998 and published in the *International Review of the Red Cross* in December 1998, the Standing Commission decided to award the Medal to several individuals to honour extraordinary achievement and commitment within the Movement.

The invitation to National Societies to nominate candidates for the award yielded a rich list of admirable individuals from all corners of the world. However, the regulations require a selection to be made of a smaller number of medallists.

#### **50th anniversary of the Henry Dunant Medal in 2015**

The Standing Commission agreed with the proposal to publish miniature biographies of those individuals who have received the Henry Dunant Medal on the Standing Commission's website as part of marking the 50th anniversary of the award.

#### **Harmony in the Movement**

Apart from the activities in relation to the implementation of the MoU, which may be regarded as an issue of harmony within the Movement, there have been few calls on the Standing Commission to act in this context. From time to time the Standing Commission is approached by individuals and groups from National Societies where there are internal tensions, but the cases that were brought to the Standing Commission's attention over the past two years were already subject to existing processes involving the ICRC and/or the International Federation, and there was no need for further intervention by the Standing Commission.

#### **Participation in external meetings**

The Standing Commission, its chairman and individual members have continued to attend, as and when invited, regional and sub-regional conferences and meetings. These have included:

- Inter-American Conference
- Europe Conference



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- Asia and Pacific Conference
- Middle East and North Africa Conference
- Mediterranean Conference

Each of these conferences was an opportunity for members of the Standing Commission to consult with National Society leaders on the preparations for the statutory meetings, and their feedback was a highly valuable supplement to the official consultation processes.

#### **Standing Commission website**

The [website](#) was “modernized” in terms of its visual characteristics, and some features added, but otherwise it has been kept structurally close to how it was before.

#### **International Conference website**

The [International Conference website](#) was completely redesigned and now also covers the Council of Delegates and a registration facility – in other words, a one-stop model that appears to work well.

### **3.3 Issues emerging during the period**

#### **Issues relating to Cyprus**

At a meeting of the Standing Commission in mid-2014, the Standing Commission decided to stand by its previous decisions on participation related to Cyprus.

During the preparations for the International Conference, further objections were raised and, in response, the Standing Commission maintained its position.

#### **Standing Commission elections**

At the 32nd International Conference, the Movement will be introducing electronic voting for the election of the Standing Commission. This, it is envisaged, will greatly reduce the time needed for the election procedure – a necessity given the short duration of the event.

#### **Secretariat**

The Secretariat of the Standing Commission remains unchanged.

#### **Finances**

The principle for financing the work of the Standing Commission, established by the Council of Delegates in Seville in 1997, was revised by the 2007 Council of Delegates in its Resolution 1, which stipulated that the future financing “shall be based on a two-year plan of action and budget to be the joint financial responsibility of the International Federation, the ICRC and the National Societies, on the basis of one-third each, with the National Society contributions continuing on a voluntary basis.”

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**Annex**

The National Societies of the following countries have generously contributed to the budget of the Standing Commission since 2011. The Standing Commission wishes to reiterate its thanks to each and every one of them.

Algeria	Japan
Andorra	Jordan
Angola	Kenya
Antigua and Barbuda	Latvia
Argentina	Lebanon
Australia	Liechtenstein
Austria	Lithuania
Azerbaijan	Luxembourg
Bahamas	Madagascar
Bahrain	Malaysia
Bangladesh	Mexico
Belgium	Micronesia
Belize	Monaco
Bulgaria	Mongolia
Cambodia	Montenegro
Canada	Morocco
Chad	Nepal
Chile	Netherlands
China	New Zealand
Colombia	Norway
Costa Rica	Pakistan
Côte d'Ivoire	Palestine
Croatia	Panama
Cyprus	Philippines
Denmark	Portugal
Ecuador	Qatar
Egypt	Republic of Korea
El Salvador	Rwanda
Estonia	Spain
Ethiopia	Sri Lanka
Fiji	Sweden
Finland	Switzerland
France	Thailand
Germany	Tonga
Honduras	Trinidad and Tobago
Iceland	Tunisia
India	Turkey
Indonesia	Turkmenistan
Iran	United Kingdom
Iraq	United States of America
Ireland	Vanuatu
Israel	Viet Nam
Italy	Zimbabwe