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COUNCIL OF DELEGATES
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NEUTRAL AND INDEPENDENT HUMANITARIAN ACTION
Consolidated report of the Commissions
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Chairpersons of the Commissions:	Ms Fatima Gailani Afghan Red Crescent
	Mr Adama Diarra Croix-Rouge malienne
	Ms Karen Diaz Belize Red Cross Society
Vice-Chairpersons / Rapporteurs:	Mr Johannes Richert (General Rapporteur), German Red Cross
	Ms Geri Lau Singapore Red Cross Society
	Mr Jean-Pierre Guiteau Société nationale de la Croix-Rouge haïtienne

Mr. President,
Dear Colleagues,

It is a pleasure and an honour to present to you in a very condensed form the outcome of this morning's discussions on 'Neutral and Independent Humanitarian Action'. The discussions in the different commissions have been very lively and focused and we would like to thank you for your highly motivated engagement at this late stage of the Conference.

Challenges in adhering to the Principles of Independence and Neutrality

With regard to the challenges we face in adhering to the Principles of Independence and Neutrality, the discussions concentrated first on the relationship between National Societies and their governments. Concerning this relationship the following problems and questions were discussed:

First, there must be a clear understanding on Independence and Neutrality on the one hand and the auxiliary role on the other hand. Each National Society should also define its auxiliary role versus their own government.

Second, it appears that there is a general lack of understanding within the public and the civil society about the uniqueness of the Red Cross Red Crescent's role – at home and worldwide.

Third, there is the danger to compromise our role and principles due to short term advantages in fundraising (donor driven approach).

Fourth, in the international field governments want to use more and more humanitarian action as an instrument of foreign policy. They tend to include their respective National Society into their operational framework which may threaten our principles. Similar problems might be encountered in our interaction with supra-national and inter-governmental

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institutions. However, it poses a challenge for us to keep our international activities limited only to a response consolidated within Movement.

Fifth, integrity and strong leadership of the National Society are of utmost importance to resist these tendencies. Realising that the emblem is one of the important tools to gain access and a sign for our specific neutral action, it should never be used beyond our defined mandates.

Sixth, especially in conflict areas, the clarity of the understanding of the Principle of Neutrality determines our ability to act.

Seventh, some participants have also underlined the challenge of asymmetric warfare in which some of the actors reject the neutral and independent action of the RCRC or the combatants are not known.

Preserving the Principles of Independence and Neutrality in relations with external actors

Regarding the interaction of the RCRC Movement components with external actors, the independence of our own operational structures has to be maintained.

We are different from NGOs and not part of governmental or UN structures, yet we have to coordinate with them. We strongly believe in the three pillars of humanitarian action, namely the UN and governmental action as one, NGO action as second and the humanitarian action of our RCRC Movement. In this respect we have to coordinate with relevant partners and insist on strictly coordinated approach inside our Movement but we are not guided by the other two pillars.

Military force, policy and humanitarian action as an instrument for gaining peace is for the RC not applicable. We strictly confine our focus towards our independent, humanitarian mission.

Only through this, our Principles can be implemented. Neutrality, independence, and our auxiliary role make us unique. This however calls upon a clear definition and understanding of the auxiliary role between the NS and the government. We have to clarify whether the auxiliary status can be transferred from the national government to a supra-national institution, such as the EU.

National Societies can play a domestic and international auxiliary role respecting our Principles. But as we are not living in an isolated world, we have to have a greater understanding as a Movement on how other actors are involved in humanitarian aid and how we can best work with them.

In case our Principles are threatened by national governments, the Movement components are called upon to intervene politically and with other appropriate means to ensure the integrity of the National Society.

Maintenance of independence and neutrality

Under 'maintenance of independence and neutrality' the civil military relations were discussed. It was highlighted that in conflict situations civil military operational cooperation beyond article 26 of the First Geneva Conventions has to be avoided. The use of armed escorts creates more problems for the Movement than a strictly independent RC operation.

However, we have to acknowledge that the role of military in huge emergency operations in natural disasters is vital due to their enormous logistical capacities. In such cases,

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cooperation can be accepted as the resolution on relations with military bodies adopted in yesterday's deliberations proposes. But the use of military capacity has to be strictly limited to our humanitarian mission.

In some exceptional circumstances, when criminality hinders proper access to the vulnerable people, cooperation with police or military forces might be considered.

There was an understanding among participants that we need to further develop our own logistical capacity if we want to preserve our independence at all times. For better understanding of governments our civil military concept has to be properly disseminated.

Support of each other's roles

We have to support each other to fulfil our different roles and mandates – nationally and internationally. The national and the international mandate and the auxiliary role of National Societies have to be disseminated to all parts of the Movement, to governments and other humanitarian actors. This also includes the understanding and support of each other's mandates and operationally could be clarified through Memoranda of Understanding.

We internally have to live the Seville Agreement and we have to establish an integrity regime managed by the ICRC and the International Federation. This could be achieved by developing minimum standards for compliance with the ten conditions for recognition, as stipulated in the Strategy for the Movement.

Recommendations

The main conclusion of the commissions were that in view of the 2007 International Conference, we need to develop a structured dialogue with the UN and the governments so that they gain a clear understanding of and acceptance for the three pillar model of humanitarian aid.

Thank You.