

**STATUTES
OF THE INTERNATIONAL RED CROSS
AND RED CRESCENT MOVEMENT**

*(adopted by the Twenty-fifth International Conference
of the Red Cross at Geneva in October 1986)*

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Statutes of the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement

PREAMBLE

The International Conference of the Red Cross and Red Crescent,

Proclaims that the National Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, the International Committee of the Red Cross and the League of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies together constitute a worldwide humanitarian movement, whose mission is to prevent and alleviate human suffering wherever it may be found, to protect life and health and ensure respect for the human being, in particular in times of armed conflict and other emergencies, to work for the prevention of disease and for the promotion of health and social welfare, to encourage voluntary service and a constant readiness to give help by the members of the Movement, and a universal sense of solidarity towards all those in need of its protection and assistance.

Reaffirms that, in pursuing its mission, the Movement shall be guided by its Fundamental Principles, which are:

Humanity *The International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement, born of a desire to bring assistance without discrimination to the wounded on the battlefield, endeavours, in its international and national capacity, to prevent and alleviate human suffering wherever it may be found. Its purpose is to protect life and health and to ensure respect for the human being. It promotes mutual understanding, friendship, co-operation and lasting peace amongst all peoples.*

- Impartiality** *It makes no discrimination as to nationality, race, religious beliefs, class or political opinions. It endeavours to relieve the suffering of individuals, being guided solely by their needs, and to give priority to the most urgent cases of distress.*
- Neutrality** *In order to continue to enjoy the confidence of all, the Movement may not take sides in hostilities or engage at any time in controversies of a political, racial, religious or ideological nature.*
- Independence** *The Movement is independent. The National Societies, while auxiliaries in the humanitarian services of their governments and subject to the laws of their respective countries, must always maintain their autonomy so that they may be able at all times to act in accordance with the principles of the Movement.*
- Voluntary Service** *It is a voluntary relief movement not prompted in any manner by desire for gain.*
- Unity** *There can be only one Red Cross or one Red Crescent Society in any one country. It must be open to all. It must carry on its humanitarian work throughout its territory.*
- Universality** *The International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement, in which all Societies have equal status and share equal responsibilities and duties in helping each other, is worldwide.*

*Recalls that the mottoes of the Movement, *Inter arma caritas* and *Per humanitatem ad pacem*, together express its ideals.*

Declares that, by its humanitarian work and the dissemination of its ideals, the Movement promotes a lasting peace, which is not simply the absence of war, but is a dynamic process of co-operation among all States and peoples, co-operation founded on respect for freedom, independence, national sovereignty, equality, human rights, as well as on a fair and equitable distribution of resources to meet the needs of peoples.

SECTION I: GENERAL PROVISIONS

Article 1 **Definition**

1. The International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement ¹ (hereinafter called “the Movement”) is composed of the National Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies recognized in accordance with Article 4 ² (hereinafter called “National Societies”), of the International Committee of the Red Cross (hereinafter called “the International Committee”) and of the League of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (hereinafter called “the League”).

2. The components of the Movement, while maintaining their independence within the limits of the present Statutes, act at all times in accordance with the Fundamental Principles and co-operate with each other in carrying out their respective tasks in pursuance of their common mission.

3. The components of the Movement meet at the International Conference of the Red Cross and Red Crescent (hereinafter called “the International Conference”) with the States Parties to the Geneva Conventions of 27 July 1929 or of 12 August 1949.

Article 2 **States Parties to the Geneva Conventions**

1. The States Parties to the Geneva Conventions ³ co-operate with the components of the Movement in accordance with these Conventions, the present Statutes and the resolutions of the International Conference.

2. Each State shall promote the establishment on its territory of a National Society and encourage its development.

¹ Also known as the International Red Cross

² Any National Society recognized at the date of entry into force of the present Statutes shall be considered as recognized in terms of Article 4.

³ In the present Statutes the expression “Geneva Conventions” also covers their Additional Protocols for the States Parties to these Protocols.

3. The States, in particular those which have recognized the National Society constituted on their territory, support, whenever possible, the work of the components of the Movement. The same components, in their turn and in accordance with their respective statutes, support as far as possible the humanitarian activities of the States.

4. The States shall at all times respect the adherence by all the components of the Movement to the Fundamental Principles.

5. The implementation of the present Statutes by the components of the Movement shall not affect the sovereignty of States, with due respect for the provisions of international humanitarian law.

SECTION II: COMPONENTS OF THE MOVEMENT

Article 3

National Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies

1. The National Societies form the basic units and constitute a vital force of the Movement. They carry out their humanitarian activities in conformity with their own statutes and national legislation, in pursuance of the mission of the Movement, and in accordance with the Fundamental Principles. The National Societies support the public authorities in their humanitarian tasks, according to the needs of the people of their respective countries.

2. Within their own countries, National Societies are autonomous national organizations providing an indispensable framework for the activities of their voluntary members and their staff. They co-operate with the public authorities in the prevention of disease, the promotion of health and the mitigation of human suffering by their own programmes in such fields as education, health and social welfare, for the benefit of the community.

They organize, in liaison with the public authorities, emergency relief operations and other services to assist the victims of armed conflicts as provided in the Geneva Conventions, and the victims of natural disasters and other emergencies for whom help is needed.

They disseminate and assist their governments in disseminating international humanitarian law; they take initiatives in this respect. They disseminate the principles and ideals of the Movement and assist those governments which also disseminate them. They also co-operate with their governments to ensure respect for international humanitarian law and to protect the red cross and red crescent emblems.

3. Internationally, National Societies, each within the limits of its resources, give assistance for victims of armed conflicts, as provided in the Geneva Conventions, and for victims of natural disasters and other emergencies. Such assistance, in the form of services and personnel, of material, financial and moral support, shall be given through the National Societies concerned, the International Committee or the League.

They contribute, as far as they are able, to the development of other National Societies which require such assistance, in order to strengthen the Movement as a whole.

International assistance between the components of the Movement shall be co-ordinated as provided in Article 5 or Article 6. A National Society which is to receive such assistance may however undertake the co-ordination within its own country, subject to the concurrence of the International Committee or the League, as the case may be.

4. In order to carry out these tasks, the National Societies recruit, train and assign such personnel as are necessary for the discharge of their responsibilities.

They encourage everyone, and in particular young people, to participate in the work of the Society.

5. National Societies have a duty to support the League in terms of its Constitution. Whenever possible, they give their voluntary support to the International Committee in its humanitarian actions.

Article 4

Conditions for recognition of National Societies

In order to be recognized in terms of Article 5, paragraph 2 b) as a National Society, the Society shall meet the following conditions:

1. Be constituted on the territory of an independent State where the Geneva Convention for the Amelioration of the Condition of the Wounded and Sick in Armed Forces in the Field is in force.

2. Be the only National Red Cross or Red Crescent Society of the said State and be directed by a central body which shall alone be competent to represent it in its dealings with other components of the Movement.
3. Be duly recognized by the legal government of its country on the basis of the Geneva Conventions and of the national legislation as a voluntary aid society, auxiliary to the public authorities in the humanitarian field.
4. Have an autonomous status which allows it to operate in conformity with the Fundamental Principles of the Movement.
5. Use the name and emblem of the Red Cross or Red Crescent in conformity with the Geneva Conventions.
6. Be so organized as to be able to fulfil the tasks defined in its own statutes, including the preparation in peace time for its statutory tasks in case of armed conflict.
7. Extend its activities to the entire territory of the State.
8. Recruit its voluntary members and its staff without consideration of race, sex, class, religion or political opinions.
9. Adhere to the present Statutes, share in the fellowship which unites the components of the Movement and co-operate with them.
10. Respect the Fundamental Principles of the Movement and be guided in its work by the principles of international humanitarian law.

Article 5

The International Committee of the Red Cross

1. The International Committee, founded in Geneva in 1863 and formally recognized in the Geneva Conventions and by International Conferences of the Red Cross, is an independent humanitarian organization having a status of its own. It co-opts its members from among Swiss citizens.

2. The role of the International Committee, in accordance with its Statutes, is in particular:

- a) to maintain and disseminate the Fundamental Principles of the Movement, namely humanity, impartiality, neutrality, independence, voluntary service, unity and universality;
- b) to recognize any newly established or reconstituted National Society, which fulfils the conditions for recognition set out in

Article 4, and to notify other National Societies of such recognition;

- c) to undertake the tasks incumbent upon it under the Geneva Conventions, to work for the faithful application of international humanitarian law applicable in armed conflicts and to take cognizance of any complaints based on alleged breaches of that law;
- d) to endeavour at all times—as a neutral institution whose humanitarian work is carried out particularly in time of international and other armed conflicts or internal strife—to ensure the protection of and assistance to military and civilian victims of such events and of their direct results;
- e) to ensure the operation of the Central Tracing Agency as provided in the Geneva Conventions;
- f) to contribute, in anticipation of armed conflicts, to the training of medical personnel and the preparation of medical equipment, in co-operation with the National Societies, the military and civilian medical services and other competent authorities;
- g) to work for the understanding and dissemination of knowledge of international humanitarian law applicable in armed conflicts and to prepare any development thereof;
- h) to carry out mandates entrusted to it by the International Conference.

3. The International Committee may take any humanitarian initiative which comes within its role as a specifically neutral and independent institution and intermediary, and may consider any question requiring examination by such an institution.

- 4. a) It shall maintain close contact with National Societies. In agreement with them, it shall co-operate in matters of common concern, such as their preparation for action in times of armed conflict, respect for and development and ratification of the Geneva Conventions, and the dissemination of the Fundamental Principles and international humanitarian law.
- b) In situations foreseen in paragraph 2 d) of this Article and requiring co-ordinated assistance from National Societies of other countries, the International Committee, in co-operation with the National Society of the country or countries concerned, shall co-ordinate such assistance in accordance with the agreements concluded with the League.

5. Within the framework of the present Statutes and subject to the provisions of Articles, 3, 6 and 7, the International Committee shall maintain close contact with the League and co-operate with it in matters of common concern.

6. It shall also maintain relations with governmental authorities and any national or international institution whose assistance it considers useful.

Article 6

The League of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies

1. The League is the international Federation of the National Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies. It acts under its own Constitution with all rights and obligations of a corporate body with a legal personality.

2. The League is an independent humanitarian organization which is not governmental, political, racial or sectarian in character.

3. The general object of the League is to inspire, encourage, facilitate and promote at all times all forms of humanitarian activities by the National Societies, with a view to preventing and alleviating human suffering and thereby contributing to the maintenance and the promotion of peace in the world.

4. To achieve the general object as defined in paragraph 3 and in the context of the Fundamental Principles of the Movement, of the resolutions of the International Conference and within the framework of the present Statutes and subject to the provisions of Article 3, 5 and 7, the functions of the League, in accordance with its Constitution, are *inter alia* the following:

- a) to act as the permanent body of liaison, co-ordination and study between the National Societies and to give them any assistance they might request;
- b) to encourage and promote in every country the establishment and development of an independent and duly recognized National Society;
- c) to bring relief by all available means to all disaster victims;
- d) to assist the National Societies in their disaster relief preparedness, in the organization of their relief actions and in the relief operations themselves;

- e) to organize, co-ordinate and direct international relief actions in accordance with the Principles and Rules adopted by the International Conference;
- f) to encourage and co-ordinate the participation of the National Societies in activities for safeguarding public health and the promotion of social welfare in co-operation with their appropriate national authorities;
- g) to encourage and co-ordinate between National Societies the exchange of ideas for the education of children and young people in humanitarian ideals and for the development of friendly relations between young people of all countries;
- h) to assist National Societies to recruit members from the population as a whole and inculcate the principles and ideals of the Movement;
- i) to bring help to victims of armed conflicts in accordance with the agreements concluded with the International Committee;
- j) to assist the International Committee in the promotion and development of international humanitarian law and collaborate with it in the dissemination of this law and of the Fundamental Principles of the Movement among the National Societies;
- k) to be the official representative of the member Societies in the international field, *inter alia* for dealing with decisions and recommendations adopted by its Assembly and to be the guardian of their integrity and the protector of their interests;
- l) to carry out the mandates entrusted to it by the International Conference.

5. In each country the League shall act through or in agreement with the National Society and in conformity with the laws of that country.

Article 7 **Co-operation**

1. The components of the Movement shall co-operate with each other in accordance with their respective statutes and with Articles 1, 3, 5 and 6 of the present Statutes.

2. In particular the International Committee and the League shall maintain frequent regular contact with each other at all appropriate levels so as to co-ordinate their activities in the best interest of those who require their protection and assistance.

3. Within the framework of the present Statutes and their respective statutes, the International Committee and the League shall conclude with each other any agreements required to harmonize the conduct of their respective activities. Should, for any reason, such agreements not exist, Article 5, paragraph 4 b) and Article 6, paragraph 4 i) shall not apply and the International Committee and the League shall refer to the other provisions of the present Statutes to settle matters relative to their respective fields of activities.

4. Co-operation between the components of the Movement on a regional basis shall be undertaken in the spirit of their common mission and the Fundamental Principles, within the limits of their respective statutes.

5. The components of the Movement, while maintaining their independence and identity, co-operate whenever necessary with other organizations which are active in the humanitarian field, provided such organizations are pursuing a purpose similar to that of the Movement and are prepared to respect the adherence by the components to the Fundamental Principles.

SECTION III: STATUTORY BODIES

The International Conference of the Red Cross and Red Crescent

Article 8 **Definition**

The International Conference is the supreme deliberative body for the Movement. At the International Conference, representatives of the components of the Movement meet with representatives of the States Parties to the Geneva Conventions, the latter in exercise of their responsibilities under those Conventions and in support of the overall work of the Movement in terms of Article 2. Together they examine and decide upon humanitarian matters of common interest and any other related matter.

Article 9

Composition

1. The members of the International Conference shall be the delegations from the National Societies, from the International Committee, from the League and from the States Parties to the Geneva Conventions.
2. Each of these delegations shall have equal rights expressed by a single vote.
3. A delegate shall belong to only one delegation.
4. A delegation shall not be represented by another delegation or by a member of another delegation.

Article 10

Functions

1. The International Conference contributes to the unity of the Movement and to the achievement of its mission in full respect of the Fundamental Principles.
2. The International Conference contributes to the respect for and development of international humanitarian law and other international conventions of particular interest to the Movement.
3. The International Conference shall have the sole competence:
 - a) to amend the present Statutes and the Rules of Procedure of the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement (hereinafter called "Rules of Procedure");
 - b) to take, at the request of any of its members, the final decision on any difference of opinion as to the interpretation and application of these Statutes and Rules;
 - c) to decide on any question, referred to in Article 18, paragraph 2 b), which may be submitted to it by the Standing Commission, the International Committee or the League.
4. The International Conference shall elect in a personal capacity those members of the Standing Commission mentioned in Article 17, paragraph 1 a) of the present Statutes, taking into account personal qualities and the principle of fair geographical distribution.
5. Within the limits of the present Statutes and of the Rules of Procedure, the International Conference shall adopt its decisions, recommendations or declarations in the form of resolutions.

6. The International Conference may assign mandates to the International Committee and to the League within the limits of their statutes and of the present Statutes.

7. The International Conference may enact, when necessary and by a two-thirds majority of its members present and voting, regulations relating to matters such as procedure and the award of medals.

8. The International Conference may establish for the duration of the Conference subsidiary bodies in accordance with the Rules of Procedure.

Article 11 Procedure

1. The International Conference shall meet every four years, unless it decides otherwise. It shall be convened by the central body of a National Society, by the International Committee or by the League, under the mandate conferred for that purpose either by the previous International Conference or by the Standing Commission as provided in Article 18, paragraph 1 a). As a general rule, favourable consideration shall be given to any offer made during an International Conference by a National Society, the International Committee or the League to act as host to the next Conference.

2. Should exceptional circumstances so require, the place and date of the International Conference may be changed by the Standing Commission. The Standing Commission may act on its own initiative or on a proposal by the International Committee, the League or at least one third of the National Societies.

3. The International Conference shall elect the Chairman, Vice-Chairmen, Secretary General, Assistant Secretaries General and other officers of the Conference.

4. All participants in the International Conference shall respect the Fundamental Principles and all documents presented shall conform with these Principles. In order that the debates of the International Conference shall command the confidence of all, the Chairman and any elected officer responsible for the conduct of business shall ensure that none of the speakers at any time engages in controversies of a political, racial, religious or ideological nature. The Bureau of the International Conference, as defined in the Rules of Procedure, shall apply the same standard to documents before authorizing their circulation.

5. In addition to the members entitled to take part in the International Conference, observers, referred to in Article 18, paragraph 1 d), may attend the meetings of the Conference, unless the Conference decides otherwise.

6. The International Conference shall not modify either the Statutes of the International Committee or the Constitution of the League nor take decisions contrary to such statutes. The International Committee and the League shall take no decision contrary to the present Statutes or to the resolutions of the International Conference.

7. The International Conference shall endeavour to adopt its resolutions by consensus as provided in the Rules of Procedure. If no consensus is reached, a vote shall be taken in accordance with these Rules.

8. Subject to the provisions of the present Statutes, the International Conference shall be governed by the Rules of Procedure.

The Council of Delegates of the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement

Article 12 Definition

The Council of Delegates of the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement (hereinafter called "the Council") is the body where the representatives of all the components of the Movement meet to discuss matters which concern the Movement as a whole.

Article 13 Composition

1. The members of the Council shall be the delegations from the National Societies, from the International Committee and from the League.

2. Each of these delegations shall have equal rights expressed by a single vote.

Article 14

Functions

1. Within the limits of the present Statutes, the Council shall give an opinion and where necessary take decisions on all matters concerning the Movement which may be referred to it by the International Conference, the Standing Commission, the National Societies, the International Committee or the League.

2. When meeting prior to the opening of the International Conference, the Council shall:

- a) propose to the Conference the persons to fill the posts mentioned in Article 11, paragraph 3;
- b) adopt the provisional agenda of the Conference.

3. Within the limits of the present Statutes, the Council shall adopt its decisions, recommendations or declarations in the form of resolutions.

4. Notwithstanding the general provision contained in Article 10, paragraph 7, the Council may amend, by a two-thirds majority of its members present and voting, the regulations for the Henry Dunant Medal.

5. The Council may refer any matter to the International Conference.

6. The Council may refer a matter to any of the components of the Movement for consideration.

7. The Council may establish by a two-thirds majority of its members present and voting such subsidiary bodies as may be necessary, specifying their mandate, duration and membership.

8. The Council shall take no final decision on any matter which, according to the present Statutes, is within the sole competence of the International Conference, nor any decision contrary to the resolutions of the latter, or concerning any matter already settled by the Conference or reserved by it for the agenda of a forthcoming Conference.

Article 15

Procedure

1. The Council shall meet on the occasion of each International Conference, prior to the opening of the Conference, and whenever one third of the National Societies, the International Committee, the League or the

Standing Commission so request. In principle, it shall meet on the occasion of each session of the General Assembly of the League. The Council may also meet on its own initiative.

2. The Council shall elect its Chairman and Vice-Chairman. The Council and the General Assembly of the League, as well as the International Conference when it is convened, shall be chaired by different persons.

3. All participants in the Council shall respect the Fundamental Principles and all documents presented shall conform with these Principles. In order that the debates of the Council shall command the confidence of all, the Chairman and any elected officer responsible for the conduct of business shall ensure that none of the speakers at any time engages in controversies of a political, racial, religious or ideological nature.

4. In addition to the members entitled to take part in the Council, observers, referred to in Article 18, paragraph 4 c), from those "National Societies in the process of recognition" which appear likely to be recognized in the foreseeable future may attend the meetings of the Council, unless the Council decides otherwise.

5. The Council shall endeavour to adopt its resolutions by consensus as provided in the Rules of Procedure. If no consensus is reached, a vote shall be taken in accordance with the Rules of Procedure.

6. The Council shall be subject to the Rules of Procedure. It may supplement them when necessary by a two-thirds majority of its members present and voting, unless the International Conference decides otherwise.

The Standing Commission of the Red Cross and Red Crescent

Article 16 **Definition**

The Standing Commission of the Red Cross and Red Crescent (called "the Standing Commission" in the present Statutes) is the trustee of the International Conference between two Conferences, carrying out the functions laid down in Article 18.

Article 17

Composition

1. The Standing Commission shall comprise nine members, namely:
 - a) five who are members of different National Societies, each elected in a personal capacity by the International Conference according to Article 10, paragraph 4 and holding office until the close of the following International Conference or until the next Standing Commission has been formally constituted, whichever is the later;
 - b) two who are representatives of the International Committee, one of whom shall be the President;
 - c) two who are representatives of the League, one of whom shall be the President.

2. Should any member referred to in paragraph 1 b) or c) be unable to attend a meeting of the Standing Commission, he may appoint a substitute for that meeting, provided that the substitute is not a member of the Commission. Should any vacancy occur among the members referred to in paragraph 1 a), the Standing Commission itself shall appoint as a member the candidate who, at the previous election, obtained the greatest number of votes without being elected, provided that the person concerned is not a member of the same National Society as an existing elected member. In case of a tie, the principle of fair geographical distribution shall be the deciding factor.

3. The Standing Commission shall invite to its meetings, in an advisory capacity and at least one year before the International Conference is to meet, a representative of the host organization of the next International Conference.

Article 18

Functions

1. The Standing Commission shall make arrangements for the next International Conference by:
 - a) selecting the place and fixing the date thereof, should this not have been decided by the previous Conference, or should exceptional circumstances so require in terms of Article 11, paragraph 2;
 - b) establishing the programme for the Conference;
 - c) preparing the provisional agenda of the Conference for submission to the Council;

- d) establishing by consensus the list of the observers referred to in Article 11, paragraph 5;
- e) promoting the Conference and securing optimum attendance.

2. The Standing Commission shall settle, in the interval between International Conferences, and subject to any final decision by the Conference:

- a) any difference of opinion which may arise as to the interpretation and application of the present Statutes and of the Rules of Procedure;
- b) any question which may be submitted to it by the International Committee or the League in connection with any difference which may arise between them.

3. The Standing Commission shall:

- a) promote harmony in the work of the Movement and, in this connection, co-ordination among its components;
- b) encourage and further the implementation of resolutions of the International Conference;
- c) examine, with these objects in view, matters which concern the Movement as a whole.

4. The Standing Commission shall make arrangements for the next Council by:

- a) selecting the place and fixing the date thereof;
- b) preparing the provisional agenda of the Council;
- c) establishing by consensus the list of the observers referred to in Article 15, paragraph 4.

5. The Standing Commission shall administer the award of the Henry Dunant Medal.

6. The Standing Commission may refer to the Council any question concerning the Movement.

7. The Standing Commission may establish by consensus such *ad hoc* bodies as necessary and nominate the members of these bodies.

8. In carrying out its functions and subject to any final decision by the International Conference, the Standing Commission shall take any measures which circumstances demand, provided always that the independence and initiative of each of the components of the Movement, as defined in the present Statutes, are strictly safeguarded.

Article 19

Procedure

1. The Standing Commission shall hold an ordinary meeting at least twice yearly. It shall hold an extraordinary meeting when convened by its Chairman, either acting on his own initiative or at the request of three of its members.

2. The Standing Commission shall have its headquarters in Geneva. It may meet in another place selected by its Chairman and approved by the majority of its members.

3. The Standing Commission shall also meet at the same place and at the same time as the International Conference.

4. All decisions shall be taken by a majority vote of the members present, unless otherwise specified in the present Statutes or in the Rules of Procedure.

5. The Standing Commission shall elect a Chairman and a Vice-Chairman from among its members.

6. Within the limits of the present Statutes and of the Rules of Procedure, the Standing Commission shall establish its own rules of procedure.

SECTION IV: FINAL PROVISIONS

Article 20

Amendments

Any proposal to amend the present Statutes and the Rules of Procedure must be placed on the agenda of the International Conference and its text sent to all members of the Conference at least six months in advance. To be adopted, any amendment shall require a two-thirds majority of those members of the International Conference present and voting, after the views of the International Committee and the League have been presented to the Conference.

Article 21

Entry into force

1. The present Statutes shall replace the Statutes adopted in 1952 by the Eighteenth International Conference. Any earlier provisions which conflict with the present Statutes are repealed.

2. The present Statutes shall enter into force on 8 November 1986.
