

## WHAT THE RED CROSS AND RED CRESCENT MOVEMENT DOES AND WANTS TO DO FOR PEACE

### **Fundamental Guidelines**

for the contribution of the  
Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement  
to a true peace in the world

#### **The Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement and peace**

Since its inception and by its very existence our Movement has striven to contribute to peace in the world.

For over 120 years, it has sincerely attempted to limit by its action and through the provisions of humanitarian law, the horrors of war, from which it was created. In fact, what it does, in time of peace as in time of war, helps—directly or indirectly—to defuse the causes of conflicts and thereby contributes to the dynamic process that leads to true peace.

Indeed, for our Movement, “peace is not simply the absence of war, but rather a dynamic process of co-operation among all States and peoples; co-operation founded on freedom, independence, national sovereignty, equality, respect of human rights, and a fair and equitable distribution of resources to meet the needs of peoples”.

All components of the Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement undertake to support, in compliance with its Fundamental Principles, efforts to preserve and strengthen true peace.

#### **Fundamental Guidelines**

The Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement has already adopted a *Programme of Action for the Red Cross as a Factor of Peace* which is to remain the basis of Red Cross and Red Crescent activities in favour

of peace. To facilitate implementation of this programme and to contribute even more constructively to peace, it has formulated these *Fundamental Guidelines* which are intended to encourage and guide the activities of its members for a true and lasting peace in the world.

As they are fundamental, they focus on essentials and set forth in simple language what the Movement does and wants to do for peace, inspired by the conviction and enthusiasm instilled by its ideals and principles.

## **A Dynamic Process and Fundamental Principles**

The Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement's strategy for peace is both dynamic and stable.

By their *humanitarian action*, the National Societies, the ICRC and the League constantly further the cause of peace. Through consistent, patient and all-encompassing effort, each component of the Movement contributes to this *dynamic process of co-operation*, which is to build such future of humanity to which we all aspire. Whereas war is most often the consequence of a long process of increasing tension, the Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement contributes to reducing tensions and defusing the causes of conflicts. In this way it works constantly—within the limits of its competence—for true peace.

This long-term action is guaranteed by respect for the *Fundamental Principles*, which are an inspiration and a guide for all the Movement's humanitarian activities and which give it its unity, its strength, its orientation and its staying power.

## **Contribution of each Fundamental Principle to peace**

By respecting and implementing each of these Principles, the Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement is making a specific contribution to a true peace in the world:

*HUMANITY. The Red Cross, 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.*

Founded on the respect of the human being, this is the superior principle inseparably linked with the idea of peace, the principle that sums up our Movement's ideal and on which all the other principles are based. To see and share the suffering of others, prevent and alleviate it in the face of violence is life-giving work. It is the first step on the road to preventing and eliminating war: Humanity is an essential factor of true peace which can never be attained through domination and military superiority.

“Per humanitatem ad pacem”—Through humanity to peace.

*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.*

This positive principle of helping others without discrimination reminds us that no distinction should be applied to people in distress. It is the opposite of the feelings of superiority, or acts of discrimination, which are at the origin of so many conflicts.

*NEUTRALITY. In order to continue to enjoy the confidence of all, the Red Cross may not take sides in hostilities or engage at any time in controversies of a political, racial, religious or ideological nature.*

For the Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement, neutrality is a means and not an end. Neutrality does not imply indifference to suffering nor acceptance of war. It is an indispensable condition for effective humanitarian action dependent on the confidence of all.

*INDEPENDENCE. The Red Cross 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 Red Cross principles.*

The independence of the Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies from public powers is essential for their humanitarian activities in the respect of the Fundamental Principles. It allows that spirit of peace which is characteristic of our Movement to reign in the hearts of the men and women comprising it. Without isolating the Red Cross and Red Crescent from others, it gives it the necessary autonomy for its humanitarian work, which makes it a unifying force amongst all peoples.

**VOLUNTARY SERVICE.** *The Red Cross is a voluntary relief organisation not prompted in any manner by desire for gain.*

To bring relief to one's fellow man, voluntary and unselfishly, bespeaks the generous spirit of service and the fellowship that opens the door to reconciliation.

**UNITY.** *There can be only one Red Cross Society in any one country. It must be open to all. It must carry on its humanitarian work throughout its territory.*

The Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement unites all people within each country's border and so is a factor of internal peace.

**UNIVERSALITY.** *The Red Cross is a world-wide institution in which all Societies have equal status and share equal responsibilities and duties in helping each other.*

Our Movement's universality stems from the attachment of each of its members to common values. One of its characteristics being the duty to help one another, it makes for the propagation in all countries of these values, seeds for rapprochement and peace among men.

### **Fostering a spirit of peace**

#### *World solidarity in humanitarian work*

Solidarity in the Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement brings together men, irrespective of their nationality, race, religion, ideology and beliefs: it speaks for human dignity because it exists only to assist and protect those who suffer and are without help in adversity. Solidarity in action is the essence of the whole Movement's contribution to peace.

#### *An ideal to confront violence, fear and distrust*

Against the vicious circle of violence, fear, and distrust, the Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement opposes forces threatening or violating peace by setting up an ideal based on respect for one's fellow man which dispels hatred, encourages confidence and fosters a spirit of peace and co-operation.

## *Speaking with one voice to the peoples of the world*

On peace as on all other matters, our Movement speaks for itself. Being independent of governments and outside the political field, it speaks a univocal humanitarian language: millions of members in over 130 countries share this ideal and address a common message to all their fellow men. Our Movement looks for a true dialogue in the humanitarian field, with a view to a better mutual understanding and dissemination of Red Cross and Red Crescent ideals. It thus brings its specific contribution to global efforts for peace, whenever it takes place with due respect for its independence and its Fundamental Principles.

## *Red Cross and Red Crescent Youth: a hope for peace*

Youth in today's world is a dynamic, mobile social force. Young people aware of their duties towards all persons contribute to understanding between men. Faithful to the ideals and spirit of the Movement, Red Cross and Red Crescent Youth, by their readiness to work, serve and accept sacrifice, can set an example for others and be a catalyst for peace.

## *Youth education for peace*

The components of the Movement should pay great attention to educating young volunteers in the spirit of peace and friendship among peoples. They should actively encourage the development of Red Cross programmes for strengthening mutual understanding and solidarity among youth, together with the exchange of information of different countries. In particular, Red Cross must fight all attempts to imbue children with contempt or hatred for other peoples.

## *Red Cross and Red Crescent, peace and human rights*

The humanitarian activity of the Movement, undertaken in compliance with its Fundamental Principles, is not only a contribution to peace but also a contribution to the respect of basic human rights.

## **Consolidating peace by reducing suffering**

### *Solidarity through development*

Preservation of world peace is inseparable from co-operation among peoples. Confronted with inequalities of resources and means, the Movement's contribution to the development of National Societies, in the spirit of friendship and mutual understanding, is a positive recognition and is proof in action that we are all united in one cause. This helps decrease inequality and contributes to a more tolerant and thus more peaceful world.

### *Compassion towards the victims of disaster*

Assisting the victims of catastrophes and disasters, whenever they occur and no matter what the cause, is a direct acknowledgement of world-wide responsibility. Understanding and fulfilling this "duty to help" is a powerful factor for peace among peoples.

### *Prevention is better than cure*

The "silent disasters" like hunger, population explosion, drought, lead people to despair and violence. To anticipate silent and other, more sudden, disasters, in order to prevent them or be better able to face them, is to work for peace.

### *Health through social action*

Caring for and assisting the most needy everywhere, improving health, contributes to a more just and humane society and thereby to reducing the causes of tension. This is the daily work of millions of members of the Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement throughout the world.

## **The Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement is peace even in war**

### *Awareness of perils of war*

Remembering the sufferings of the peoples during the Second World War and other wars, conscious of the terrible consequences of the use of arms especially nuclear arms and other weapons of mass

destruction, all members of the Red Cross and Red Crescent consider it their moral duty to work, in conformity with the principles and ideals of the Movement, for the prevention of these sufferings in any part of the world and for a lasting peace as an indispensable condition of social progress. This task is more indispensable than ever in the present international situation where mankind is threatened with huge accumulation of increasingly sophisticated weapons that are a waste of material and other resources.

*Easing the tensions that cause the arms race*

Trust leads to disarmament and disarmament to peace. Our Movement supports the final goal of complete disarmament, with the necessary means of control. It can help to create the climate of confidence indispensable to attaining this goal, especially by contributing to reducing, in its specific field of action, the causes of tension. It appeals to governments to spare no effort for progress towards complete disarmament in conventional weapons and weapons of mass destruction, including nuclear arms.

*A spirit of peace in the thick of the fighting*

Born of the horrors of war, our Movement demonstrates a spirit of peace, even in the heat of battle. By respecting those who can no longer fight, whichever side they are on, by helping the wounded and protecting civilians and prisoners, it creates “zones” of peace in the thick of the fighting, thereby facilitating a process of co-operation and peace between the belligerents.

*Protecting the weak by law*

Developing International Humanitarian Law, teaching the soldier in time of peace to respect non-combatants in time of war, is to try and attenuate the horrors of battle through respect for the defenceless; it is to limit suffering and thereby facilitate the return to peace; it is to contribute to a spirit of peace.

*Giving refugees new reasons for and means of living*

Providing shelter for refugees, whether temporarily or permanently, helping them live, forwarding their messages, tracing missing persons and uniting families, is to give inner peace, dignity as

human beings and hope to those who have left all. It is an essential contribution of the Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement to the bringing of true peace to a world where individuals are threatened by so much violence.

*Helping without taking sides*

Because it must help the victims of all parties in conflict, our Movement does not choose sides. It remains above all political controversy in its own humanitarian field and thus safeguards its possibilities to carry out humanitarian work for all, without exception.

*Laying the ground for prevention of wars and for peaceful solution of armed conflicts*

The National Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies and their federation, the League, besides their own efforts, support the ICRC in the activities it can undertake to prevent conflicts or to facilitate their peaceful solution, its resolve strengthened by the universal confidence it has won.

THE RED CROSS AND RED CRESCENT MOVEMENT HOPES THAT, BY FOLLOWING THESE GUIDELINES, IT WILL GIVE INSPIRATION TO ALL THE PEOPLES AND GOVERNMENTS OF THE WORLD, AND WILL THUS CONTRIBUTE TO FINDING THE PATHS WHICH WILL LEAD HUMANITY TO LASTING PEACE.

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