

Message to the World Community

Through Humanity to Peace

The Second World Red Cross and Red Crescent Conference on Peace, held in Aaland and Stockholm from 2nd to 7th September 1984, addressed the following message to the peoples and governments of the world:

With 120 years experience in the protection and assistance of victims of armed conflicts, natural disasters and other calamities the Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement reaffirms that its own contribution to a true peace is expressed in its motto, "*Through Humanity to Peace*".

Sustained by its many millions of members, the Movement is determined to become ever-more active in the service of its humanitarian ideals.

In this positive spirit, delegations from 102 countries have met in Aaland, Finland's demilitarised "islands of peace", and in Stockholm. Some National Society members have come from countries which are actually at war or whose governments are strongly opposed to one another. Nonetheless, the atmosphere throughout the Conference has been one of mutual respect, tolerance and consensus—the very basis for a common ideal.

The Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement is deeply concerned by the tension, violence, racial discrimination and violation of human rights in many parts of the world. It recognises that inequitable social and economic factors are major causes of unrest. It notes, with grief, that there are today over 30 international or internal conflicts fought with conventional weapons.

In many of these conflicts, no distinction is made between combatants and civilians, the latter being often the target of deadly weapons. This lack of distinction violates the fundamentals of International Humanitarian Law.

The Movement is particularly alarmed by the continuing production of weapons of all types, including nuclear, chemical and space weapons.

For the Movement, peace is not just the absence of war but a dynamic process of co-operation among all States and peoples. It is based on the amicable settlement of disputes, respect for human rights, and the fair and equitable distribution of resources. True peace is firmly founded on the respect of international law and on mutual understanding.

The Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement therefore reiterates its dedication to the alleviation of famine and the improvement of health worldwide. It will continue its relief work for the distressed, refugees, displaced persons and victims of armed conflicts, whether they are civilians or prisoners.

Respect for humanitarian law is essential to peace. The Movement therefore entreats governments to ratify the existing humanitarian conventions, to respect them and to ensure their respect. For its part, the Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement will continue to pursue the development and wide dissemination of International Humanitarian Law.

Through appropriate educational programmes, the Movement will continue to meet the aspirations of young people, and to promote among them the ideals of the Red Cross and the Red Crescent.

From its Second World Conference on Peace, the Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement urges all governments to strive constantly for co-operation, solidarity and friendship among peoples everywhere, by genuine dialogue.

It exhorts all governments to work unceasingly for gradual and controlled disarmament—both of conventional weapons and of all weapons of mass destruction, which threaten the very existence of mankind.

It appeals to all adults and young people to dedicate themselves wholeheartedly to promoting the dignity of man and to respect humanitarian values, so making a personal commitment to true peace worldwide.

In the spirit of this Conference, with National Society representatives concentrating on what binds them together in the Red

Cross and Red Crescent, the Movement trusts that the world will go “*Through Humanity to Peace*”.

Attached and forming a part of this document is a list of Red Cross and Red Crescent selected initiatives for peace emanating from, and recommended by, the Conference.

Dissemination of knowledge of International Humanitarian Law

1. National Societies should develop more effective means to disseminate knowledge of International Humanitarian Law among all sections of their population, through their existing or future activities. This dissemination should be an integral part of all major development programmes.
2. The ICRC should study whether it is feasible to establish standard tests to determine the level of knowledge of International Humanitarian Law in armed forces.

Respect of humanitarian Conventions

3. National Societies should co-operate with their governments, parties to the Conventions, in order that they respect, and ensure respect, for International Humanitarian Law worldwide.
4. The Movement should support efforts now being made for a convention banning the production, testing, storage and use of chemical weapons.

Protection of civilians and children

5. The Movement, alarmed by the increasing civilian casualties in armed conflicts, should induce the governments and other political powers to observe the protection granted to the civilian population by International Humanitarian Law.
6. The Movement urges the establishment of zones where civilians can live safely in times of armed conflict.
7. The Movement should support all efforts to protect children in situations of armed conflict and to prevent their participation in hostilities, at least before the age of 15.

Peace education and training

8. A basic curriculum for peace education, emphasising training in the solution of conflicts, should be jointly developed by the

ICRC and the League. Education based on this curriculum should be encouraged, especially for young people.

9. The ICRC should be invited to develop a programme for training its delegates in all forms of negotiation, including mediation in humanitarian and other fields.

Development activities

10. Disaster prevention, aimed at the protection and rehabilitation of the environment, should be an important component in all major development programmes—so reducing the risk of drought, floods and the ensuing unrest and potential conflict.
 11. National Societies should work unceasingly, on the basis of Red Cross and Red Crescent solidarity, to overcome hunger and other calamities, eliminate their long-term consequences thus diminishing potential threats to peace.
 12. National Societies should contribute to practical and acceptable measures to solve demographic problems, diminishing tension in areas where population growth exceeds food production, where applicable.
 13. National Societies should intensify their efforts to support primary health care, particularly in developing countries.
 14. Since development helps reduce inequalities, themselves causes of tension, National Societies should devote more effort to this end preferably within the framework of the League's "Strategy for Development".
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