

reasons related to the emblem, or for other reasons, cannot today become the full members of our Movement we would wish them to be. We must invite them to work with us in the field, we must consult them, share our concerns with them, help them to develop, and support their activities.

In this spirit, we say to our friends the Eritrean, Israeli, Kazakh and Palestinian societies: we know you share our ideals, we have seen the commitment of your volunteers. We are happy to see you among us in this Council of Delegates.

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The Emblem

Statement by Jacques Forster, Vice-President, International Committee of the Red Cross

First of all, I would like to heartily congratulate the members of the Joint Working Group on the Emblem, set up by the Standing Commission pursuant to Resolution 2 of the 1999 Council of Delegates, for their remarkable achievements. In just a few months, they devised a comprehensive and lasting solution to the emblem question, which is likely to bring about a broad consensus; they proposed a widely accepted shape and name, the red crystal; they placed their solution within a legal framework that has received substantial support, namely the draft Third Protocol additional to the Geneva Conventions of 12 August 1949, an instrument with which you are all familiar; and they led the negotiations that garnered the support of the majority of States and National Societies. More progress was made on this issue in just a few months than in all the preceding years. A diplomatic conference was convened to examine and adopt the Third Additional Protocol, and success was within reach, when the resumption of hostilities in the Middle East brought the consultation process to a temporary halt.

The ICRC nevertheless remains convinced of the relevance of the path chosen by the Joint Working Group, that is the adoption of a

third additional emblem free from any national, political, cultural or religious connotation, along with the option, in certain circumstances, of using that emblem in combination with one of the existing ones. The ICRC believes that this is the only path which can bring about a comprehensive and lasting solution to the emblem question — a question that has remained too long in abeyance — and one which will enable us to create a truly universal Movement by recognizing the National Societies that have not yet been able to become fully-fledged members, for reasons directly or indirectly related to the emblem.

I would like to address my remarks most especially to the representatives of those National Societies and, through them, to all their volunteers, in order to assure them of our determination to reach a solution that will permit them to occupy their rightful place within the Movement.

Let there be no doubt about it: the ICRC wishes to see all National Society volunteers the world over, who believe in our humanitarian mission, share our principles and pursue our humanitarian aims — sometimes at the risk of their own lives — take a full part in the Movement's activities. Beyond our institutions, which lie at the heart of humanitarian solidarity, the Movement draws its strength from the men and women, the nurses and ambulance drivers, the young and old, and the people from all walks of life who have not lost faith in mankind and who believe they can help build a more humane world. These volunteers can be found in Eritrea, Israel, Kazakhstan and Palestine, as they can be found in all countries and regions, in Africa, Asia, the Americas, Europe and Oceania. They can be found wherever there is suffering. Yes, we wish to work together with these volunteers, through their National Societies, in every way we can. In fact, the cooperation that currently exists between these Societies, the Federation and the ICRC shows that we have already turned our words into action.

I take this opportunity to respond to a question that was raised yesterday by the representative of the Egyptian Red Crescent. Cooperation with these National Societies has been developed on a pragmatic basis and has no effect whatsoever on their legal status within the Movement. I would also like to say, in response to Mr El-

Shafei, that we have engaged in broad cooperation with the Palestine Red Crescent, especially in the area of health care.

It behoves the Council of Delegates to express its full appreciation for the activities of the Working Group on the Emblem and to voice its support for draft Protocol III and the consultation process led by the Standing Commission. The day will come when current events no longer present an obstacle but instead an opportunity to move forward with our project. And when that day comes, we must be ready for it.

In order to ensure that this can happen, the ICRC calls on all States and political leaders to shoulder their responsibility and create an environment that is conducive to resolving the emblem question. This is both their responsibility and their duty towards mankind.

In today's world of conflict and tension, we must, for the sake of the victims, commit ourselves even further to strengthening the protective value of the red cross and red crescent. It is essential that these emblems be recognized everywhere and at all times as the symbols of independent, neutral and impartial humanitarian action. In order to ensure this, we must all work together in unison and harmony. The Council of Delegates provides us with an ideal forum to reaffirm our common determination to do so.