Madam Chairperson,

I want to thank this International Conference for giving me the opportunity to chair its Drafting Committee. In the first half of the year, Dr. Mohammed Al-Hadid, Chairman of the Standing Commission, had proposed such a role for me. I accepted the nomination after deep reflection and wide consultation. Once I agreed to perform this role I dedicated myself to exploring consensus. I promised impartiality and efficient conduct.

Consensus building is a process, not an event. Diligence by a critical mass of negotiators and facilitators determines the outcome.

I will therefore begin this report by thanking the ICRC and the IFRC for the thorough preparations they had made over the past several years. This year, the Movement intensified their extensive consultations with the states parties and national societies on the draft texts structured around four core objectives:

One, Collaborative action and partnerships to address humanitarian challenges

Two, Role of National Societies as auxiliaries to the public authorities

Three, Reaffirmation and implementation of IHL

Four, Strengthening the legal frameworks for international response to disasters

In the last two months, with the full blessings and backing of Dr. Jakob Kellenberger, Mr. Markku Niskala, and Dr. Al-Hadid, we launched into an even more intensive consultative process involving several ambassadors and delegations based in Geneva to identify the areas of convergence and to narrow down divergences. In this effort, I was helped by:

Secretary-General designate at that time: Ambassador Stephan Husy;

IFRC: Mr. Ibrahim Osman, Mr. Christopher Lamb, Ms. Yulia Gusynina and Ms. Elise Baudot;

ICRC: Dr. Philip Spoeri, Mr. Balthasar Staehelin, Mr. Jean-Phillipe Lavoyer, Mr. Bruce Biber, Ms. Marion Harroff-Tavel, Mr. Jean Marie Henkaerts, Ms. Victoria Gardner.
Standing Commission: Ms. Helena Korhonen.

The Drafting Committee had before it a number of documents and was given the task of negotiating them and reaching consensus with a view to their adoption by the plenary.

The documents are:

– Draft Declaration “Together for Humanity”
– Draft Resolution 1: “Together for Humanity”
– Draft Resolution 2: The Specific Nature of the Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement in Action and Partnerships and the Role of National Societies as Auxiliaries to the Public Authorities in the Humanitarian Field
– Draft Resolution 3: Reaffirmation and Implementation of International Humanitarian Law “Preserving Human Life and Dignity”
– Draft Resolution 4: Adoption of the Guidelines for the Domestic Facilitation and Regulation of International Disaster Relief and Initial Recovery Assistance

I have the pleasure to report that on 28 November by 7.00 p.m. the Drafting Committee adopted by consensus all the texts and decided to transmit them to the Conference plenary. These texts were re-endorsed by the Committee in all official languages yesterday on 29 November.

The Drafting Committee engaged in in-depth, substantive negotiations on all documents. A number of ad-hoc working groups were established to reach agreement of specific parts of the texts. I would like to convey our deepest appreciation to the facilitators who helped us reach consensus in some of the most sensitive and potentially divisive areas. Those illustrious fellows were from:

– International Federation: Christopher Lamb
– ICRC: Balthasar Staehelin, Brigitte Troyon, Knut Doermann
– Egypt (including on behalf of the African Group): Mohamed Fakhry, Omar Shalaby
– Norway: Rolf Einar Fife
– United States: Jeffrey Kovar
– India: Mohinder Grover
– British Red Cross and the UK Government
– Netherlands: Liesbeth Lijnzaad
– Swedish Red Cross: Bengt Westerberg, Malin Greenhill
– Switzerland: Alexandre Ghelew
– Holy See: Anthony Jesus Figuiredo
– Dominican Republic, Ethiopia
The list is not exhaustive.

I am also pleased to report that the majority of issues were solved at the plenary itself which demonstrated the genuinely collegial, cooperative and constructive spirit that prevailed in the room. I appreciate the serious concessions delegations made to reach consensus.

When I was invited to address a meeting of the Governing Board of the IFRC on November 19, one representative of a National Society responding to my invitation to participate fully in the work of the drafting committee said that the International Conferences are dominated by Governments. I can testify that National Societies along with Governments made excellent contribution and enriched the content of our resolutions.

The Drafting Committee was truly composed of Governments and National Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies. They showed what “Together for Humanity” means in real terms and how results can (and should always) follow good intentions. The documents before you, thus, represent an aggregation of interests of the Movement and States Parties to Geneva Conventions that, we hope, will be endorsed by the plenary.

A wise man once said that consensus is what many people say in chorus but do not believe as individuals. It is also believed that consensus texts usually represent the lowest common denominator. Not the consensus produced by this drafting committee. This Drafting Committee presents the texts that, we believe, reflect a common denominator for future vision and direction. These texts strengthen not weaken the original drafts.

The Draft Declaration “Together for Humanity” along with its draft Resolution represents the state of thinking of this Conference on the major contemporary humanitarian challenges in the areas of environment, international migration, urban violence and public health. The role of the Movement components, in particular the National Societies, in solving those issues is recognized throughout the documents. In the draft Declaration they are portrayed as partners to the governments. Their active participation in the work of the Drafting Committee shows their commitment to this partnership, be it the measures to decrease the vulnerability of communities to environmental hazards and degradation; or humanitarian assistance to vulnerable migrants, irrespective of their legal status; or humanitarian activities to prevent or mitigate violence; or filling the gaps in facilitating access of vulnerable people, without discrimination, to prevention, health promotion and curative care.

The draft Resolution on the Specific Nature of the Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement in Action and Partnerships and the Role of National Societies as Auxiliaries to the Public Authorities in the Humanitarian Field endorses a similar resolution recently adopted by the Council of Delegates of the Movement and provides guidance to Governments and National Societies on how to improve qualitatively dialogue and complementary action for the benefit of the vulnerable people.

The draft Resolution on Reaffirmation and Implementation of International Humanitarian Law “Preserving Human Life and Dignity” contains a strong commitment from all members of the Conference to respect and ensure respect for humanitarian law. It strongly reaffirms the applicability and relevance of IHL for preserving human life and dignity in armed conflict. The resolution is premised on the conviction that IHL remains as relevant in armed conflicts today as ever before, from traditional inter-State wars to the wide variety of armed conflicts not of an international character the world
suffers today. IHL continues to provide valuable legal protection to the victims of all these types of armed conflict.

In this resolution, we will reaffirm the basic tenets of IHL that include the right to humane treatment, the prohibition of torture and other forms of ill-treatment, of arbitrary detention and the right to fair trial. It highlights the obligation of the parties to a conflict, as well as third State, to grant humanitarian relief and relief workers rapid and unimpeded access to civilian populations in need, and the obligation to respect and to protect humanitarian relief personnel. In the context of the conduct of hostilities, it reaffirms the principles of distinction, the prohibition of indiscriminate attacks, the principle of proportionality and the obligation to take all feasible precautions. These principles also apply to the protection of civilians from the indiscriminate use and effects of weapons.

In some of the most difficult areas, excellent results were produced by Rolf-Einar Fife of Norway, Jeffrey Kovar of the US, and Omar Shalaby of Egypt.

The resolution on the Adoption of Guidelines on the Facilitation and Regulation of International Disaster Relief and Initial Recovery Assistance was agreed. The Resolution adopts the IDRL Guidelines and sets out the future role for National Societies, States and the International Federation in the area of IDRL. Although non-binding, the Guidelines reflect a broad agreement on how institutional, policy and legal frameworks could effectively facilitate and regulate international disaster response. The Guidelines were subject to a lengthy consultation process including High Level Regional Multi-stakeholder Forums, as well as through other global, regional and bilateral meetings, briefings and discussions. I was told that in total, over 150 States, 140 National Societies, and over 40 Agencies and Bodies of the United Nations, International and Regional Organisations and NGOs were consulted on the various previous drafts. I was also informed that strong support for the Resolution and Guidelines was also evidenced by the numerous statements of participants of Commission C. These Guidelines are in fact a free gift to states which may choose to customise, adapt and adopt them voluntarily as they develop laws and streamline their administrative machinery.

I would like to thank the three Vice-Chairs of the Drafting Committee: H.E. Ambassador Valery Loshechinin of the Russian Federation; Mr Abbas Gullet, Kenya Red Cross Society; and Mr Ian Courtenay, Belize Red Cross. They sat through the proceedings faithfully to follow all developments in the Committee. Their support enhanced the Committee’s efficiency.

My thanks go to the most efficient Committee Secretariat team. It was a dream team. They are:

Yulia Gusinyna (Fed)
Jean-Marie Henckaerts (ICRC)
Victoria Gardener (ICRC)
Victoria Bannon (Fed)
Baptiste Rolle (ICRC)
Karin Layoun (Fed)
Azim Nourani (ICRC)
Marie-Noelle Laforest (ICRC)
**General Support**  
Yves-Jean Dumeril (ICRC) – Document coordination  
André Lorber (Fed) - Administration  
Helene Pantelic (Fed) – Administration  
Eva Zanardi-Chan (Fed) - Administration

I would also like to thank Ms. Nanaz Shahidi-Chubin, under whose stewardship, interpreters supported our difficult negotiations. Our thanks also to the officers responsible for room allocation, translation, and document distribution.

Now is the time for special thanks. Ms. Yulia Gusynina who was the focal point and my one window liaison with the IFRC and the ICRC. She simply did an outstanding job. She made the entire organisational process look like piece of cake. Thank you, Yulia. Mr. Chris Lamb, who was my political eyes and ears, as well as my compass. Jean-Marie Henckaerts for his sharp legal acumen and diligence. Ms. Andrée Lorber-Willis, Head of IFRC Administration, who made every administrative chore work like clockwork. And my delegation – Ahmar Ismail as well as Tehmina Janjua and Aftab Khokher - for giving me space and support.

Last but not least Ambassador Stephen Husy, Secretary General of the Conference, in his unassuming yet most effective manner, provided leadership to running of this humanitarian marathon. Two agile Assistant Secretary-General – Mr. Bruce Biber and Mr. Frank Mohrhauer – gave tremendous support and sustenance to the Conference.

Madam Chairperson, I also thank you and other colleagues in the Bureau for the wise counsel and excellent guidance to the Committee.

A final note: I have authorised some editorial corrections to be made in the translations into the French, Spanish and Arabic languages. A list of these corrections is being included in the report of this Conference.

The documents are ready for adoption by the 30th International Conference.

I thank you, Madam Chairperson.