Outcomes of the 28th International Conference of the Red Cross and Red Crescent

In December 2003, the 28th International Conference of the Red Cross and Red Crescent was held in Geneva bringing together representatives from all Red Cross and Red Crescent National Societies, the States party to the Geneva Conventions, the ICRC and the International Federation. The conference theme was “Protecting Human Dignity” and adopted a number of important decisions on many humanitarian challenges affecting the world today.

In particular the Conference adopted the Agenda for Humanitarian Action, which identifies a number of goals and actions for the international community to work towards in the years ahead. The Agenda for Humanitarian Action focused on four main areas:

- The issue of persons missing in connection with armed conflict other situations of armed violence
- The human costs of the availability, use and misuse of weapons in armed conflict
- Reducing the risk and impact of disasters and the improvement of preparedness and response mechanisms
- Reducing the risk and impact of HIV/AIDS and other infectious diseases with regard to vulnerable people

Final Goal 3.2 of the Agenda for Humanitarian Action specifically related to IDRL – “Enhance international disaster response through support for the compilation and application of the laws, rules and principles applicable to international disaster response”.

The full text of this goal is reproduced below. More information about the 28th International Conference is available at: http://www.ifrc.org/meetings/statutory/intconf/28th/

Final Goal 3.2 Enhance international disaster response through support for the compilation and application of the laws, rules and principles applicable to international disaster response

It is essential to provide neutral and impartial assistance to all populations affected by disasters, without discrimination and on the basis of vulnerability and need. Experience has shown that achieving this goal depends to a significant extent on improved understanding of the regulatory framework within which international disaster response is provided. Global research conducted as part of the International Federation’s IDRL Project identified that there are many instruments aimed at improving international disaster response but that awareness of them is often lacking and implementation inconsistent.
Actions proposed

3.2.1 All members of the Conference welcome the work undertaken by the International Federation in cooperation with National Societies, States, the United Nations and other bodies to collate and examine the effectiveness of laws, rules and principles applicable to international disaster response, as noted in United Nations General Assembly Resolution on strengthening the effectiveness and coordination of international urban search and rescue assistance (A/RES/57/150).

3.2.2 All members of the Conference recognise that improved awareness, clarification, application and development of laws, rules and principles applicable to international disaster response will assist in facilitating and improving the coordination, timeliness, quality and accountability of international disaster response activities and can therefore make a major contribution to the protection of human dignity in situations of disasters.

3.2.3 States and the components of the Movement are encouraged to work together to ensure the fullest possible consideration and application, where appropriate, of the laws, rules and principles that pertain to international disaster response, as well as the recommendations of Resolution 6 of the 23rd International Conference of the Red Cross and Red Crescent on measures to expedite international relief and United Nations General Assembly Resolution on strengthening the coordination of emergency humanitarian assistance of the United Nations and its accompanying Annex (A/RES/46/182).

3.2.4 States, recognizing the importance of the independent and auxiliary role of National Societies with respect to the public authorities in providing humanitarian services in the event of disaster, are encouraged to work in cooperation with their respective National Societies and the International Federation to review existing disaster management laws and operational instruments at the national, regional and international levels so as to enhance harmonization with relevant laws, rules and principles, and where feasible, guidelines applicable to international disaster response.

3.2.5 States that have not yet done so are encouraged to consider acceding to and implementing the Tampere Convention on the Provision of Telecommunication Resources for Disaster Mitigation and Relief Operations in order to facilitate the effective use of telecommunications in disaster and emergency relief operations. States will, as appropriate, also implement the relevant resolutions of the International Conference of the Red Cross and Red Crescent, International Telecommunication Union and United Nations related to the use of telecommunications in disasters, as well as access and protection of disaster response and mitigation workers.
3.2.6 The International Federation and National Societies will continue to lead collaborative efforts, involving States, the United Nations and other relevant bodies, in conducting research and advocacy activities relating to the compilation of the laws, rules and principles applicable to international disaster response. This includes identifying any outstanding needs in terms of the legal and regulatory framework and the development of models, tools and guidelines for practical use in international disaster response activities. This also includes the active promotion of the awareness, dissemination, clarification and application, where appropriate, of the laws, rules and principles applicable to international disaster response, as well as applicable guidelines by States and the international community at all levels. The International Federation will submit a progress report to the International Conference of the Red Cross and Red Crescent in 2007.