



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 focussed 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.

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

Final Goal 3.1 of the Agenda for Humanitarian Action specifically related to disaster risk reduction, disaster preparedness and disaster response

*Acknowledge the importance of disaster risk reduction
and undertake measures to minimise
the impact of disasters on vulnerable populations*

Comprehensive disaster risk reduction, including disaster management, prevention and mitigation can be achieved through education and awareness-raising activities. Other measures to minimise the impact of disasters include: effective management of natural resources and protection of the environment; the implementation of early warning systems; ensuring that building codes, particularly in disaster prone countries, are implemented and enforced to limit suffering

caused by structural damage; supporting sustainable recovery; and optimizing capacity-building opportunities for vulnerable populations. Of particular importance is directing such efforts towards populations that are most at risk, including those marginalized because of poverty, discrimination or social exclusion, or those that do not have access to disaster preparedness and response services as a consequence of their circumstances or legal status.

Actions Proposed

- 3.1.1** States should, in accordance with the United Nations International Strategy for Disaster Reduction, review their existing legislation and policies to fully integrate disaster risk reduction strategies into all relevant legal, policy and planning instruments in order to address the social, economic, political and environmental dimensions that influence vulnerability to disasters.
- 3.1.2** State authorities should take appropriate operational measures to reduce disaster risks at the local and national levels, including sustainable natural resource, environmental and land-use management, appropriate urban planning, and enforced building codes. States should, in cooperation with National Societies and other concerned agencies, implement disaster risk awareness programmes, public education programmes, early-warning systems, contingency planning, disaster management training and other mitigation and preparedness measures, based on risk, vulnerability and capacity assessments.
- 3.1.3** States, in cooperation with National Societies, are urged to incorporate risk reduction as a central feature in national development plans, poverty-reduction strategies and post-disaster recovery plans, be it on their own territory or through their development and cooperation assistance in a bilateral, multilateral or regional context, with a special emphasis on reducing the vulnerability of populations in hazard-prone areas or otherwise at risk owing to poverty, marginalization, social exclusion or discrimination.
- 3.1.4** States are strongly encouraged to prioritize and provide resources to implement comprehensive disaster risk reduction measures, including measures to address issues relating to climate change and variability. National Societies will increase their cooperation with States and experts in the area of climate change in order to

limit the potential negative impact on vulnerable populations. In so doing, they may draw on the recommendations outlined in the report “Preparedness for climate change” as requested by the Plan of Action of the 27th International Conference in 1999.

- 3.1.5** 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 field of disaster management, should negotiate clearly defined roles and responsibilities with their respective National Societies in risk reduction and disaster management activities. This may include National Society representation on relevant national policy and coordination bodies as collaborative partners with States. States should also take specific legal and policy measures to support and assist National Societies in building sustainable volunteer and community capacity, particularly promoting the participation of women, in the areas of risk reduction and disaster management.
- 3.1.6** The components of the Movement, in cooperation with States, will prioritize and scale up efforts to build sustainable capacity and improve performance in the area of disaster risk reduction, including disaster management, awareness-raising and advocacy activities at the local, national and regional levels. This will include an emphasis on building effective and inclusive partnerships with populations that live in hazard-prone areas or are otherwise vulnerable owing to poverty, marginalization, social exclusion or other forms of discrimination and will involve all relevant partners.
- 3.1.7** The International Federation will support the efforts of National Societies to strengthen their capacity in the field of disaster risk reduction through continued knowledge sharing on best practices, resource mobilization and advocacy on disaster risk reduction issues with States and other relevant international, regional and national actors, including with the private sector.

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