

## The 30th International Conference of the Red Cross/ Red Crescent

Last November, the International Red Cross statutory meetings were held in Switzerland. Particularly relevant was the 30<sup>th</sup> International Conference of the Red Cross and Red Crescent on 26-30 November. This conference – held every four years – brings together all components of the Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement with the world's states signatory to the Geneva Conventions to consider and adopt resolutions on major, current humanitarian issues. The conference focused on the humanitarian consequences of four great challenges the world faces today which affect the individual, and specifically the most vulnerable:

- environmental degradation and climate change;
- humanitarian concerns generated by international migration;
- violence, in particular in urban settings;
- emergent and recurrent diseases and other public health challenges, such as access to health care.

The global scale of each of these challenges requires a collective response, as they exceed the coping capacity of individual states or humanitarian organizations. In addressing their humanitarian consequences it was acknowledged that all attending parties need to intensify operational interaction and partnerships among themselves, with other institutions at several levels – intergovernmental, supranational, non-governmental, academic – as well as with media and the private sector.

In the document on environmental degradation and climate change, the Red Cross/Red Crescent and governments express great concern about the impacts of environmental degradation and climate change on poor people, contributing to poverty, migration, health risks and aggravated risk of violence and conflict. The document stresses the need for awareness raising and humanitarian assistance, and states the importance of the community base of the Red Cross/Red Crescent. It calls for more attention for disaster preparedness and risk reduction, and mobilization of the necessary resources for this, giving priority to the most vulnerable people. Finally the states' commitments to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) were acknowledged, and the supportive and complementary work of the Red Cross/Red Crescent Movement to elements of this was affirmed.

The text on environmental degradation and climate change in the adopted resolution of the Conference reads as follows<sup>1</sup>:

### **Humanitarian consequences of environmental degradation and climate change**

- We are deeply concerned that people everywhere, especially the poorest of the poor, face an increased burden due to the rise in disasters and the scarcity of resources induced by multiple factors such as environmental degradation and climate change, contributing to poverty, migration, health risks and aggravated risk of violence and conflict.
- We are resolved to work with partners to raise awareness about these serious

<sup>1</sup> to read the *entire* resolution adopted at the 30<sup>th</sup> International Conference of the Red Cross and Red Crescent, please visit the following website:  
<http://www.ifrc.org/Docs/pubs/events/intconf07/adopted/declaration-en.pdf>

- humanitarian concerns, including their causes, and to provide humanitarian assistance to the most vulnerable people, in particular in affected developing countries.
  - We will capitalize on the community base of National Societies to decrease the vulnerability of communities where environmental hazards and degradation are severe and adaptive capacity is low.
  - We reaffirm that preparedness for disaster is a key element in the management of response, and will seek to improve individual and collective capacity to respond swiftly to humanitarian challenges induced by environmental degradation and climate change.
  - We are resolved to ensure that environmental degradation and adaptation to climate change are integrated, where relevant, in disaster risk reduction and disaster management policies and plans. We will seek to mobilise the necessary human and financial resources to implement them, giving priority to actions for the most vulnerable people.
  - We acknowledge the commitment of States to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) as the core mechanism for addressing climate change at the global level, and we affirm that aspects of the Movement's work support and complement elements of the UNFCCC.
- Integration of the adaptation agenda of the Kyoto protocol with the priorities of the Hyogo Framework for Action on disaster risk reduction;
  - Inclusion of a target for adaptation funding in developing countries in the protocol that should be concluded in Copenhagen in 2009;
  - Development of mechanisms to mobilize adequate and predictable resources for adaptation in developing countries which are to be agreed upon in the Copenhagen protocol;
  - Increased investments by developed countries for the period 2008-2012 to strengthen capacity for climate risk management in developing countries.

Building on this outcome declaration, the Red Cross and Red Crescent delegation that attended the United Nations Conference on Climate Change – COP 13 stressed five main issues regarding climate change adaptation which are in urgent need of adequate attention:

- Adoption of the leading principle of balancing resources spent on adaptation in developed and developing countries;