

32nd International Conference of the Red Cross and Red Crescent, The safety and security of humanitarian volunteers

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The safety and security of humanitarian volunteers

[Preamble]

The 32nd International Conference of the Red Cross and Red Crescent,

noting that the purpose of this resolution, among others, is to raise awareness and promote the safety and security of humanitarian volunteers,

recognizing with gratitude the enormous contribution of humanitarian volunteers and other humanitarian personnel, including the 17 million volunteers working with National Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (National Societies), to the well-being of their communities,

highlighting in particular, the service of the 7,000 Red Cross and Red Crescent volunteers who worked in Ebola-affected countries in 2014-15 and the 1 million Red Cross and Red Crescent volunteers who live and work in countries exposed to armed conflict,

noting with grave concern the highly elevated risks that volunteers and other humanitarian personnel face in armed conflicts, which include but are not limited to physical attack, psychological trauma, social stigma and accidental injury and which may be affected by gender,

acknowledging that humanitarian volunteers and other personnel can also face these and other risks in other circumstances, such as disasters, health emergencies and even in daily support to their communities,

noting with dismay that nearly 100 Red Cross and Red Crescent volunteers lost their lives in the course of their duties since the 31st International Conference of the Red Cross and Red Crescent (International Conference) in 2011, *expressing* its sympathy for their families and communities, as well as its solidarity with volunteers who have been injured, traumatized or otherwise harmed,

recalling that, under international humanitarian law, humanitarian relief personnel, as civilians, must be respected and protected and that international human rights law also provides a framework for protecting persons;

acknowledging that protecting humanitarian volunteers is both a moral and humanitarian imperative, in light of their humanity and their service, and a practical necessity, in light of their indispensable role in humanitarian action and the impacts that insecurity can have on their recruitment and retention,

recognizing that while the safety and security of all humanitarian personnel is extremely important, research recently completed by the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (International Federation) has shown that the situation of volunteers has often received far less attention,

affirming our determination to cooperate in preventing and mitigating risks to volunteers to the degree feasible, to collaboratively implement initiatives that will promote a safer environment for them, and to strengthen our efforts to meet the needs of injured or traumatized volunteers and of the families of volunteers killed or injured in the line of duty,

stressing the importance of strong data, research and learning to understand and reduce risks to humanitarian volunteers and other humanitarian personnel, including gender-related risks,

recalling relevant resolutions of the International Conference, including Resolution 4 of the 31st International Conference, which called on States and National Societies to create and maintain an enabling environment for volunteering, including through the promotion of supportive legislation and policy,

recognizing the complementarity of the present resolution with Resolution [Number] of the present International Conference entitled “Health care in danger: continuing to protect the delivery of health care together,” as regards the safety and security of Red Cross and Red Crescent personnel,

recalling that United Nations General Assembly Resolution 67/138 of 2012 requested States and the UN to work together with other volunteer-involving organizations to support efforts to enhance the security and protection of volunteers,

reaffirming that the work of humanitarian volunteers will be critical to success in meeting international goals related to community resilience, as set out in the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015-2030 and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development,

Determination to protect

1. *calls* on National Societies, and all other actors deploying humanitarian volunteers, to make every effort to provide their volunteers in a timely manner with the best safety-related information, guidance, training, protective equipment, psychological support and insurance within their means; □

2. *urges* National Societies, and all actors deploying humanitarian volunteers, to continuously review potential threats to their volunteers, including but not limited to those related to gender, and to ensure that their plans and programmes include measures to reduce and mitigate these risks;

3. *invites* States and other relevant stakeholders to support National Societies and other actors deploying humanitarian volunteers in these endeavours, including, as appropriate, through training, expertise and resources; □

4. *calls on* States to promote the safest environment feasible for humanitarian volunteers, bearing in mind the inherent risks in some of their activities, including, in accordance with national practice, measures to promote public understanding and acceptance of the role of humanitarian volunteers, the integration of measures to protect volunteer safety and security in national laws, policies, plans and programmes for emergency management, and measures to hold perpetrators of crimes against humanitarian volunteers accountable; □

Enhancing knowledge

5. *encourages* States, in cooperation, as appropriate, with National Societies and other relevant stakeholders, to develop and/or maintain national systems for the collection and dissemination of comprehensive data, including sex and age disaggregated data, relevant to the safety and security of humanitarian volunteers in a manner consistent with applicable national law and calls for international data collection efforts on humanitarian safety to also include information about volunteers;

6. *encourages* States, National Societies, and all other relevant stakeholders to regularly share challenges and good practices with regard to improving the safety and security of humanitarian volunteers;

7. *invites* the academic community to increase its research into problems concerning humanitarian volunteers and potential solutions to those problems and encourages States to consider increasing their financial support for such research;

Enhancing understanding

8. *stresses* the importance of ensuring that humanitarian volunteers are aware and respectful of national and local customs and traditions and communicate clearly their purpose and objectives within communities in order to enhance their acceptance, thereby contributing to their safety and security, and in this regard to ensure that humanitarian action is guided by humanitarian principles;

9. *encourages* National Societies to ensure that their volunteers are fully trained in applicable safety procedures and protocols, including the use of any necessary protective equipment, in the application of the

Fundamental Principles of the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement, and are familiar with the use of global tools such as the International Committee of the Red Cross's Safer Access Framework and the International Federation's "Stay Safe" toolkit;

Promoting insurance or equivalent protection

10. urges National Societies and all actors deploying humanitarian volunteers to make every effort, within their means, to ensure that their volunteers have adequate insurance or equivalent "safety net" assistance with regard to death, injury, sickness or trauma they may endure while carrying out their duties;

11. commends those States that have provided direct or indirect support for the insurance or equivalent "safety net" assistance for volunteers of National Societies and other actors deploying humanitarian volunteers within their territories and *urges* others to consider doing so, to the maximum extent feasible;

12. urges States and other relevant stakeholders to also consider providing such support in other countries, as donors, in accordance with national legislation and the humanitarian principles;

13. encourages the International Federation to continue to support National Societies in identifying cost-effective means to insure or otherwise respond to the needs of their volunteers;

Implementation and support

14. invites the International Federation and the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) to offer their support to National Societies and States in carrying out the implementation of this resolution and also encourages National Societies to support each other with the sharing of best practices and challenges;

15. encourages the International Federation, ICRC and National Societies to continue to strengthen partnerships with other stakeholders, including the UN, in promoting the safety and security of volunteers;

16. requests operational partners to National Societies to cooperate with them, with support, as appropriate, from the International Federation and/or the ICRC, to ensure that any joint projects do not pose unnecessary risks to volunteers;

17. requests the International Federation to submit a report on progress with this resolution at the 33rd International Conference.