

**Permanent Mission of Iceland
to the International Organizations in Geneva**



Statement by
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On the occasion of

**The 30th International Conference
Of the Red Cross and Red Crescent**

General Debate on Collaborative Action and Partnerships
to address Humanitarian Challenges

Geneva, 27 November 2007

Madam Chair,

At the outset I wish to congratulate you on your election as the Chairperson of the 30th International Conference of the Red Cross and the Red Crescent and wish you every success in your task ahead.

The theme of this debate is well chosen. Major humanitarian challenges can only be effectively addressed through collaboration and partnership. Climate change is a prime example of where the key lies in working together.

Madam Chair,

The latest report from the UN Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change sheds light on the scale of the impact. Climate change is already devastating the lives of millions. The most vulnerable in developing countries tend to be hardest hit, those who are least responsible for causing changes to the climate.

While mitigation of climate change is an urgent matter to be addressed in the first instance by governments, adaptation is an equally urgent task to which the Red Cross already makes vital contributions. Effective adaptation entails human development and humanitarian support, to preserve what has already been achieved in development. In many instances adaptation is a matter of survival.

Madam Chair,

The values enshrined in humanitarian law and upheld and promoted with vigour by the Red Cross for many decades cannot be taken for granted. Governments need to be constantly on guard against erosion of this body of law. Terrorism has in recent years posed a major security challenge as well as being responsible for atrocious acts against humanitarian and human rights law. Nevertheless, the struggle against terrorism and violence should never be at the expense of fundamental human rights and humanitarian law. I would like to pay tribute to the leadership of the Red Cross movement in this area.

Key to maintaining humanitarian standards is the raising of awareness among all actors in all countries. In Iceland we are, in co-operation with the Red Cross, in the process of establishing a National Committee on Humanitarian Law which is intended to advise the Government of Iceland on the interpretation and implementation of international humanitarian law and to disseminate knowledge on this law.

Madam Chair,

Iceland would like to express support for the violence prevention programmes which the Redcross has instituted as well as the psycho-social programmes in conflict areas, particularly among children.

The Secretary-General of the United Nations recently made unambiguous comments on the “atrocious inhumane impact of cluster munitions”. Iceland will continue its support for the ongoing Oslo process towards a legally binding instrument of international law that should prohibit the use, development, stockpiling and transfer of cluster munitions that cause unacceptable harm to civilians.

Madam Chair,

The Government of Iceland recognizes the indispensable work carried out by organizations in humanitarian and development work. The Government of Iceland has therefore decided to double the contributions in 2008 allocated to humanitarian and relief operations through the Red Cross as well as Icelandic NGOs.

At this Conference, the Government of Iceland and the Icelandic Red Cross will make joint pledges for the years 2008 – 2011, on co-operation and a joint initiative for increasing knowledge of International Humanitarian Law (IHL) at national level.

Madam Chair,

There is a high level of public support in Iceland for the work of the Red Cross movement. This is not least due to the visible commitment over many years of the Icelandic Red Cross to humanitarian work both at home and abroad.

On behalf of the Government of Iceland, I would like to pay tribute to the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) and the International Federation of the Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC) for their untiring, devoted work and noble mission.

Thank you, Madam Chair.