



International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies  
Fédération internationale des Sociétés de la Croix-Rouge et du Croissant-Rouge  
Federación Internacional de Sociedades de la Cruz Roja y de la Media Luna Roja  
الاتحاد الدولي لجمعيات الصليب الأحمر والهلال الأحمر

**Delegation to the United Nations**

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**STATEMENT BY MS ANNE CHRISTENSEN  
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Agenda item 28: Advancement of Women  
Third Committee of the United Nations General Assembly  
New York, 13 October 2010

Mr Chairman,

On behalf of the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC), allow me to first congratulate you and the members of the Bureau on your election to guide the important work of the Committee during this session. I would also like to thank you and the speakers for the informative briefings received at the outset of this debate.

Mr Chairman,

Women, in every corner of the world, are still suffering from the impact of the economic and financial crisis. Other humanitarian challenges such as poverty, climate change, food insecurity, migration, internal displacement and conflict result in additional vulnerabilities. Women are disproportionately affected by many of these challenges, as well as by the impact of natural disasters, the scarcity of resources, and the lack of access to adequate health and education services. To make matters worse women continue to be subjected to unacceptable levels of violence. In light of this, I will focus my remarks today on addressing violence.

With its global network in diverse communities, the Red Cross Red Crescent has a crucial role to play in promoting women's health and well-being. In particular, Red Cross and Red Crescent National Societies have a unique position to support governments through their auxiliary role and an unparalleled ability to mobilize communities.

Mr Chairman,

Violence against women is a common feature of emergency situations and one which we often encounter. The IFRC is working to ensure that when we respond to emergencies, appropriate violence prevention, mitigation and response strategies are incorporated into our programming. For example, in post-earthquake Haiti women were particularly hard-hit. In response, the IFRC appointed a delegate specialized in gender based violence (GBV) and in the prevention of sexual exploitation and abuse (PSEA) to integrate these concerns across our programs, and to create safe environments for our beneficiaries. Gender considerations are built into all areas of our work, including water and sanitation, health, and shelter; in

line with our gender policy. We also work to prevent violence in communities and families and provide counselling.

In addition to efforts such as these, much more is needed to protect women in vulnerable situations. Governments, donors, and humanitarian providers must continue to make combating violence against women a priority and to ensure that it is holistically integrated into response and longer-term development programmes.

Mr Chairman,

Every day, Red Cross and Red Crescent National Societies around the world are engaging with adult men and women, youth and children to change mindsets, attitudes and behaviours through programmes that challenge gender stereotypes, xenophobia and discrimination; as well as programmes that build up self-esteem and teach skills such as empathy, non-violent communication and conflict management. Innovative programmes such as 'Ten Steps to Creating Safe Environments' and 'Youth as Agents of Behavioural Change' are reaching individuals in their formative years and are helping to create environments that are safer for women, girls, boys and men alike. The IFRC is currently finalizing a global violence strategy to guide and enhance its work in the area of violence prevention, mitigation and response in the coming decade.

Mr Chairman,

To address underlying causes of vulnerability and foster safe and resilient communities, we encourage an increase and strengthening of volunteer programs. By enhancing volunteerism we are able to put forward a two-fold approach to supporting women.

Firstly, women volunteers, both young and old, are best versed in providing humanitarian assistance to their communities, and in particular to other women.

Secondly, when engaged, women more easily find support systems, which help them build the confidence necessary to face their day-to-day problems.

Women volunteers engage in crucial activities such as walking the critical last mile to provide malaria bed-nets and spread health messages in Kenya; shaping mass SMS communications about relief distributions and vaccination campaigns in Haiti; providing psychosocial support in Finland; and engaging in disaster management in Bangladesh.

Mr Chairman,

I assure you that IFRC will remain committed to empowering women and men through our programmes and activities.

Thank you.