International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies

**Position of the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies
at the World Summit on the Information Society Tunis phase, and beyond**

"ICT for Humanity – Ready to Inform, Ready to Act"
Information Society, Promotion and Support
by the Red Cross & Red Crescent National Societies

1. The International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (the International Federation) maintains its views as expressed in the Sub-Committee B of the PrepCom 3 of the World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS). The proposal submitted previously (WSIS-II/PC-3/CONTR/78) commenting the draft outcome papers of the WSIS Tunis phase remains valid.

2. For the International Federation, the information society provides possibilities for swift information sharing beyond boundaries, which is crucial for both relief and development actions in the humanitarian field. It provides additional opportunities for the dissemination of information on disaster and health risk reduction; it can offer new training opportunities, better programme implementation, improved coordination and cooperation and stronger advocacy for the vulnerable. It allows global commitment to happen through local actions.

3. The access to information and knowledge is essential for the achievement of the United Nations Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). As part of their work which contributes to the achievement of these goals and in pursuing development for all, the National Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies can bring unique strength to the programs of other partners.

4. This derives from their status as auxiliaries to the public authorities in the humanitarian field. Especially significant is their ability to mobilise their worldwide network of National Societies and its 100 million volunteers and members. They provide a network, linking not only international and local levels, but also within the communities, in particular for those in need – the marginalised, the poor, the most vulnerable. National Societies are committed to reaching out to all these communities, and see the creation and promotion of the information society as a key to the achievement of their objectives and through that to the achievement of the MDGs.

5. We welcome the proposed commitment by Head of States and Governments (paragraph 31 of the draft Tunis Commitment WSIS-II/PC-3/DT12(Rev.3)-E) in leveraging ICT capabilities and potential through fostering and strengthening cooperation at the national, regional and international levels for disaster mitigation. With this political will behind our work, the International Federation looks to take full advantage of ICT in progressing the joint commitment made by the Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement and States parties to the Geneva Conventions at the 28th International Conference of the Red Cross and Red Crescent (Geneva, December 2003):

   "acknowledge the importance of disaster risk reduction and commit to undertake measures to minimise the impact of disasters on vulnerable people"

   "prioritise and expand efforts to build sustainable capacity and increase their effectiveness in health awareness and advocacy activities at the local and national levels, with an emphasis on building effective and inclusive partnerships with populations that are vulnerable owing to poverty, marginalisation, social exclusion and discrimination."

6. Within this framework, we give the highest priority to form meaningful partnerships with all sectors sharing the common objective of **"ICT for Humanity".** We welcome the engagement of all stakeholders in **"e-preparedness"** (as we call our ICT programme). The e-preparedness approach harnesses ICT for the Red Cross and Red Crescent National Societies, as well as other interested parties. We look to become more effective in preparing communities for disasters, mitigating their impact, managing health crises and advocating for the vulnerable. Furthermore, the skills developed amongst the staff and volunteers are able to play an effective part in the development of their communities and the nation around them.

The way forward:

Technology alone is not enough – Information only becomes useful as a result of human interaction or communication.
The International Federation therefore gives its full support to developing ICT for information/knowledge sharing and early warning systems, but stresses the importance of:

- **investing in youth and volunteers** so that they can raise awareness and educate communities;
- **establishing local level networks** that can both receive and act on information and warning;
- **building the capacity in the communities**, with ICT support, to promote good governance;
- **taking a multi hazard approach** to assure sustainability by using ICT to provide a holistic cycle of activities from prevention, awareness, alert to response and its follow-up.

In conclusion, the deep involvement of the Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies at the community level in response to the needs of the most vulnerable has given the International Federation unique insight into the opportunities and pitfalls of ICT. The urgent need to bridge the digital divide with technologies does not discount the need to ensure that the process is made with an "ICT for Humanity" approach.

The International Federation will remain engaged with the Information Society development process beyond the WSIS. It will continue its challenging endeavour in humanitarian work by using the "e-preparedness" concept with new possibilities brought by ICT, especially as brought forward at WSIS.

The International Federation welcomes partners to make it a collaborative effort. With success, the world – from hardware to humanity – will be better equipped for the challenges ahead.