

The 32nd International Conference of the Red Cross and Red Crescent
Geneva 8 – 10 December 2015

Statement by the Icelandic Delegation

Madam Chair,

Iceland feels strongly about the importance to uphold respect for international humanitarian law and welcomes the numerous draft resolutions before us as an opportunity to fight the widespread violations we are witnessing.

In this regard we fully support establishing an annual Meeting of States on International Humanitarian Law.

We also support measures to fight sexual and gender based violence. As sexual and gender based violence does not only happen in armed conflicts but also in disasters and other emergency situations we should not limit our focus on international humanitarian law but also refer to international human rights law. Especially as the Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies clearly have a role to play in all these situations. We should also reaffirm existing obligations including by referring to Security Council Resolution 1325.

The emphasis must first and foremost be on prevention, including training of armed and security forces and by applying zero tolerance towards violators. When sexual and gender based violence has been committed the focus has to be on affording victims protection and ensure prosecution of those who are guilty of these crimes.

Throughout history sexual violence has often been regarded as an unavoidable corollary of armed conflicts. In 2015, we should all be able to agree that that should be a thing of the past. No Government, no military or for that matter, an international organisation, should have the option to stand by and do nothing.

Madame Chair,

At the 31st International Conference the Icelandic Government and the Icelandic Red Cross Society made a number of common pledges. I am happy to inform you that it is our common view that these pledges have been successfully implemented and I would like to mention specifically a cooperation agreement concluded between the Icelandic Ministry for Foreign Affairs and the Icelandic Red Cross in 2012, a number of visits from the ICRC to Iceland to discuss humanitarian issues and finally that we now have a new bill before parliament to improve the working procedures as regards asylum seekers.

I am also pleased to inform you that the Government and the Icelandic Red Cross Society have agreed on a number of new pledges. These will be sent to the conference data base as requested but they concern for example respect for international humanitarian law, protection of refugees coming from conflict areas, increased assistance to victims of human trafficking and measures against prejudice against foreigners.

Thank you, Madame Chair