

The letter

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FROM THE SECRETARY GENERAL

Special issue: Solferino

Dear friends,

It is often said that young people are the future of the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement, but I feel that is only part of the story. Young people are the Movement's driving force here and now, and are the world's best hope for real and lasting behavioural change at the community level and beyond.

I have never doubted that this is the case – but the successes recorded at the recent Solferino “Youth on the move” gathering were far beyond my expectations.

More than 500 volunteers and staff from 149 National Societies gathered in Solferino from 23 to 28 June 2009 to mark the birth of the Movement and the actions of one man, Henry Dunant, who had a simple idea that would dramatically change the world.

“Youth on the move”, the third World Red Cross Red Crescent Youth Meeting, brought together many dedicated and highly motivated young people from all over the world who attended seminars on issues such as the humanitarian impact of climate change, social justice, HIV and disaster management.

They also discussed how to address today's ‘Solferinos’, i.e. the most pressing humanitarian challenges facing our world. These culminated in the [Solferino Declaration](#), and this bold call for greater humanitarian action was presented to members of the international community – i.e. the Geneva and Swiss authorities, representatives of the United Nations, of States, and of the Movement - in Geneva on 2 July.

The IFRC now has a responsibility to ensure that their voices are not only heard but are acted upon. I take this responsibility very seriously indeed.

The Red Cross Red Crescent will build on the success of “Youth on the move” at the 17th General Assembly, to be held in Nairobi in November. Red Cross Red Crescent youth will play an active part in this event, and their achievements will be recognized with the presentation of a Youth Award.

I feel that the IFRC's pledge at the 2007 International Conference - on the promotion of youth development – is progressing well as a result of these initiatives, although we can still do more and do it better. Our young humanitarians deserve no less.

Earlier this month, in Geneva, I met with the youth representatives after they had delivered their declaration. I thanked them for their hard work and dedication and reminded them that, no matter where they were from and what National Society they worked or volunteered for, they will always have a home at the IFRC. I am sure that many of the young delegates will be back as managers, heads of department and secretaries general in the years to come.

The Solferino events have added to the ongoing success of the “Our world. Your move.” campaign, which was launched on 8 May, and have helped to boost the capacity and profiles of our National Societies.

The Youth Declaration and Declaration of Paris - which marked the 90th anniversary of the IFRC - are important advocacy tools for National Societies, particularly with regard to humanitarian diplomacy and the promotion of the auxiliary role. They could also be used to improve National Society profile by linking the Geneva-based diplomatic missions with the government in your respective countries.

Further information on these events is available online:

Paris Declaration – http://www.ifrc.org/meetings/events/Paris2009/156400-Paris-declaration-English_LR.pdf

Youth Declaration – http://www.ifrc.org/meetings/events/solferino/170700-Youth_declaration-EN-4PAGES-LR.pdf

Campaign launch in Geneva – <https://fednet.ifrc.org/sw181772.asp>

Solferino events - <http://www.ifrc.org/meetings/events/solferino/index.asp>

Solferino youth video diaries and campaign news – www.youtube.com/yourmove09

With my best wishes until my next newsletter,



Bekele Geleta