

The Secretary General

To: All Secretaries General National Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies

Geneva, 1 December 2008

Dear Mr /Ms. Secretary General,

As part of my desire to mark next year's anniversary of the Battle of Solferino and the early beginnings of the Red Cross with an unprecedented spirit, I am writing to update you on the preparations of events to take place in Solferino, Italy, next June. These events are not only a celebration of Henry Dunant's response to human suffering, but also serve to highlight youth and volunteers as a driving force for bringing about important social change.

As you will recall from my last letter in August, the Solferino events are just one component of a global image-building and advocacy campaign that will be launched in 2009 under the slogan "Our world. Your move." The campaign is jointly led by the International Federation of the Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies and the International Committee of the Red Cross and will seek to bring international attention to the humanitarian challenges of today and tomorrow, and underline the need for individual and joint action in addressing them.

The Solferino events will include a meeting of World Red Cross Red Crescent Youth, the organisation of a Humanitarian Village, a torch-lit procession known as the Fiaccolata, and a commemorative journey from Solferino to Geneva. I would like to commend the over 70 Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies which have confirmed their participation in the Solferino events, and which I hope will be joined by others over the coming months. In order to ensure your continued commitment to – and involvement in – these events, I take this opportunity to update you on some important developments in our planning.

1. The World Red Cross Red Crescent youth meeting

The commitment to hold a World Red Cross Red Crescent youth meeting (from 23–28 June) was made at the 2007 International Conference, with the aim of preparing Red Cross and Red Crescent youth volunteers for the humanitarian challenges – or Solferinos -- of tomorrow. The meeting will bring together youth from National Societies around the world, as well as technical experts and external partners, to discuss the role of youth in tackling future vulnerabilities, and to train volunteers in best practices from around the world. In such a way, the youth meeting is a step in the implementation of our long-term plans on youth development, and an important opportunity to increase the scale and quality of national youth programmes and structures. Youth participants will conclude the meeting by drafting a Declaration, calling for action by world leaders on the humanitarian challenges that they consider to be most pressing today.

2. The Humanitarian Village

In 2009, the campsite prepared by the Italian Red Cross to host Red Cross Red Crescent youth and volunteers will be organized as a "humanitarian village". At the camp, we plan to show disaster response training simulations, preparedness activities and the like, to illustrate our organisation in action, and to share best practices from around the world.

National Societies will play a central role in suggesting, supporting, and leading specific exhibits organised for the Humanitarian Village. This will provide them with the opportunity to show their Society in action and to demonstrate how the Red Cross Red Crescent makes a difference in

improving the lives of the most vulnerable. Several thousand Red Cross and Red Crescent guests are expected to visit the Humanitarian Village and to take part in the events. We also expect media, government representatives, and other Red Cross Red Crescent stakeholders to come and witness our Movement in action.

3. The “Fiaccolata”

On 27 June 2009, a torch-lit procession - following in the footsteps of the nurses and helpers that carried the wounded from the battlefield in Solferino to the first aid post in Castiglione - will conclude the commemorative events in Solferino. In addition to the representatives attending the Youth meeting, volunteers from a large number of National Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies will march along the ten-kilometre road with torches, marking with every step, the humanitarian spirit. Each year, thousands participate in this moving and visually compelling happening. At the end of the procession, a ceremony will take place, at which international celebrities will address the audience and deliver, on behalf of all participants, the message from the Red Cross and Red Crescent youth meeting.

4. The Commemorative Journey from Solferino to Geneva

Following the commemorative events, a symbolic march from Solferino to Geneva has been organized by the Swiss Red Cross, to mirror Henry Dunant's return home after the Battle of Solferino. On June 28th, a selected number of youth representatives from National Societies will travel (by foot and on bus) to the Italian/Swiss border, and then onto Geneva. On the afternoon of July 2, a ceremony will be held at the UN Geneva Headquarters, where the youth will deliver their “Call to Action” to governments worldwide.

Your support

To make this a successful meeting, and to allow our volunteers to travel from every part of the world, we must mobilize resources both nationally and internationally, to ensure a wide - and geographically diverse - presence. Many National Societies from developing countries have already indicated that they will require financial support in order for their youth volunteers to participate in the Youth meeting, and I hereby kindly ask that partner National Societies consider, within their means, a contribution to the Youth meeting. I also wish to invite all interested National Societies to actively participate in the Humanitarian Village, by organising exhibits and simulations that show the work of their staff and volunteers in action.

To ensure the success of our Campaign, we kindly ask you to engage and support your youth, volunteers, and international departments, in planning and preparation of the Solferino events. Should you need any help or clarification please do not hesitate to contact the persons below:

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With my very best regards,



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CC: National Society: Presidents, Youth Coordinator, Press Officer. International Department

CC: Secretariat: Zone Offices