



Delegation of the International Federation of Red Cross  
and Red Crescent Societies to the United Nations

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**STATEMENT BY MR WALTER COTTE  
ON BEHALF OF THE INTERNATIONAL FEDERATION  
OF RED CROSS AND RED CRESCENT SOCIETIES**

High Level Meeting to Assess the Implementation of the New Urban Agenda  
United Nations General Assembly  
New York, 28 April 2022

Mr. President,

On behalf of the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC), thank you for convening this meeting and for the opportunity to contribute to this discussion.

As the world's largest humanitarian network, the IFRC and our 192 National Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies and 15 million volunteers have supported governments and urban communities for decades in preparing for, responding to, and recovering from disasters. We have used our network and experience in urban settings to reinforce the COVID-19 response by working alongside local governments and city health service providers to deliver risk communication, mental health and psychosocial support, WASH programming, personal protective equipment and hygiene kits, as well as food and cash assistance to help people who have lost their livelihoods.

As stated in the UN Secretary-General's Quadrennial Report, rapid urban growth has had the greatest effect on the poorest and most vulnerable communities the most, risking their access to basic services and fueling exclusion. The IFRC's World Disasters Reports have shown that the compounding effects of climate change with poverty, displacement, and the COVID-19 pandemic particularly affect people living in urban environments, causing an increase in the digital divide, urban violence, homelessness, tenuous employment, and mental health issues.

Rapid and drastic changes are needed to our existing urban systems to deal with the impacts of climate change, disasters, migration, and pandemics, and we remain committed to supporting the most vulnerable and hard to reach as they cope with these increasing and complex disasters.

Mr. President,

In view of these growing challenges, we need to collectively scale up action to build more sustainable and resilient urban communities. Based on the experience of our National Societies, who are already working with communities to respond to these critical issues for urban populations, we call on Member States and other stakeholders to take the following actions:

**First**, we must act in the interest of the most vulnerable, by including local authorities and community actors in decision-making processes and integrating community resilience and preparedness into urban planning. Local communities know best their own vulnerabilities and strengths, and we must fund and support programmes and partners that understand their local context and can define lasting, viable solutions. Our National Societies, as auxiliaries to their governments and members of the communities they serve, are uniquely positioned to broker a trusted relationship with the most marginalized and vulnerable urban communities, including migrants and displaced people.

At the national level, the role of National Societies as auxiliaries to their governments and as providers of humanitarian services has strengthened their reach to people in need and allowed them to provide timely assistance. **We call on governments and other stakeholders to strengthen the auxiliary role of National Societies at the municipal level, so that they can best serve the most vulnerable and reach people in need in urban settings.**

**Second**, we must increase investment in sustainable and environmentally responsible approaches to humanitarian action and building resilience in urban contexts, including anticipatory action and nature-based solutions, to better address the particular challenges and vulnerabilities of people living in cities. The IFRC and our National Societies stand ready to support the development and implementation of public policies and approaches to disaster risk reduction, social inclusion, and climate-smart initiatives for urban communities.

Mr. President,

The IFRC and our National Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies will continue to work alongside new and existing partners to support our communities in preparing for and recovering from acute and protracted emergencies, to mitigate the impacts of humanitarian crises, and to reach the most vulnerable, so that no one is left behind.

Thank you.