

TENTH ANNIVERSARY OF THE INTERNATIONAL YEAR OF VOLUNTEERS

VOLUNTEERING FOR A SUSTAINABLE FUTURE

Global Volunteering Conference: Budapest, Hungary 15-17 September 2011

**Organized by the
International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC)
and the United Nations Volunteers (UNV) programme**

DECLARATION

Volunteering is universal, inclusive, and embraces free will, solidarity, dignity and trust. We value, recognize and encourage the contribution of volunteering to the well-being of people, their communities and our planet. We celebrate volunteering as an essential expression of common humanity.

Volunteers bring sustainable development, poverty reduction, debt relief, HIV/AIDS awareness, and environmental campaigns to communities. They play an important role in disasters and crises, help build livelihoods, strengthen social cohesion, and contribute to human development

The world has changed since the establishment of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) in 2000. Much has been achieved through the efforts of volunteers. In the run-up to Rio+20 the post MDG sustainable development agenda must put volunteering at the centre.

For the full potential of volunteering to be realized, volunteers must be recognized, protected and supported by government, civil society, academia, the private sector, and inter-governmental entities.

As advocates, policy-makers, supporters and practitioners of volunteerism we will strive to:

- a. Incorporate volunteerism, civic engagement and volunteers into national and local plans and priorities for sustainable development, human rights, peace and security;
- b. Recognize the role of volunteerism in social inclusion and as a means to involve and benefit all segments of society, without discrimination, including volunteering for and with refugees and internally-displaced persons;
- c. Adopt a holistic approach to sustainable development and human rights through gender-sensitive community-centred initiatives that build on the values that volunteering contributes, so as to foster economic growth and social change;
- d. Document and exchange good practices on the role, impact and effectiveness of international and national volunteers in peace, sustainable development and human well-being;
- e. Incorporate volunteering and cross-sector volunteer networks into the planning and management of crisis; and mainstream volunteer disaster risk reduction and disaster management into overall development programming;
- f. Highlight the crucial post-conflict contribution of volunteering towards building institutions, local capacity, and social cohesion. Engage young people as agents for peace, development and behavioural change, as well as in building skills and leadership development;
- g. Promote the participatory development of national volunteerism policies, legislation and rights-based approaches, including fiscal frameworks, appropriately tailored to contexts and maximizing the promotion, protection and recognition of volunteerism;
- h. Continue to explore new ways to volunteer by connecting and engaging people through information and communication technologies;
- i. Enhance existing and create new forms of volunteerism in the private sector through collaborative corporate social responsibility, including employee volunteering and training in disaster management;
- j. Measure both the economic and social value of volunteering at the local, national and global levels to provide concrete and comparable evidence of the power of volunteerism for the public, media, and decision-makers. Measurements of national GDP should include the

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added value created by volunteering and recognize civic participation as an indicator of growth.

There must be greater investment and better institutional collaboration to quantify and give value to volunteer work, in particular volunteering for equity and social inclusion. Therefore, we call upon all stakeholders to take effective steps at the local, national, regional, and global levels to advance volunteerism in building communities for peace and sustainable development. We urge:

- a) *Governments* to recognize the economic and social value of volunteerism to achieve national development goals and well-being, and to provide an enabling environment for volunteerism as well as support for infrastructure and recognition of the values of civic participation; this includes incorporating volunteerism in their forthcoming deliberations for 'Rio+20';
- b) *The Private Sector* to engage in employee volunteering and partnerships in enhancing the capacities of volunteer-involving organizations for achieving sustainable development and peace;
- c) *The Media* to communicate the value of volunteerism and promote a supportive environment for community engagement;
- d) *Civil Society* to mainstream volunteerism and civic engagement into sustainable development and peace programming;
- e) *Educational Institutions and Academia* to integrate volunteerism and an understanding of civil society into curricula to promote universal recognition of the value of volunteering;
- f) *The Educational and Private Sectors* to ensure that the skills volunteers are gaining through non-formal education as part of their volunteering activities are recognized, and the flexibility to take part in volunteering activities is given to every volunteer;
- g) *The Research Community*, including National Statistical Offices, to intensify study of the value and impact of volunteerism on development and crisis prevention and response; and to develop indicators of progress that incorporate civic engagement, voluntary action and human well-being;
- h) *Faith-based groups* to affirm volunteering for peace and sustainable development as an appropriate response to the spiritual call to service;
- i) *Volunteer-Involving Organizations* to ensure the effectiveness and accountability of volunteerism through sound governance, sustainable principles, development of the capacity to manage volunteers, and monitoring and evaluation of impact;
- j) *United Nations Entities* to further recognize and integrate volunteerism in its various forms into their policies, programmes, and reports;
- k) *Red Cross and Red Crescent National Societies* to further their efforts to protect, promote and recognize volunteers in their capacity as auxiliary to Governments.
- l) *All Stakeholders* to call for a volunteer coalition to provide a platform for promotion, knowledge-sharing, capacity development, and collective actions on volunteerism.

We call on Governments, the United Nations system, the Red Cross Red Crescent and other stakeholders to renew efforts to implement resolution 56/38 and subsequent resolutions of the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) on measures to support, promote and advocate for volunteerism.

We commit to bringing this declaration to the attention of our constituencies in forums such as the 31st International Conference of the Red Cross and Red Crescent in November 2011 and the forthcoming sessions on volunteerism taking place at the UNGA in December 2011.

About the Global Volunteer Conference

Organized by the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC) and the United Nations Volunteers (UNV) programme, the first Global Volunteer Conference was held in Budapest, Hungary, from 15-17 September 2011. It involved around 200 participants from 70 organizations and 85 countries. This declaration summarizes the collective thoughts of all participants present from the UN, IFRC, civil society, NGOs and governments, aimed at carrying these ideas forward into the future through their respective organizations.

