



**United Nations Economic and Social Council  
Substantive Session of 2007**

(Geneva, 2-27 July 2007)

EXD/CN.4/S.2007/CONF/1

High-level Segment

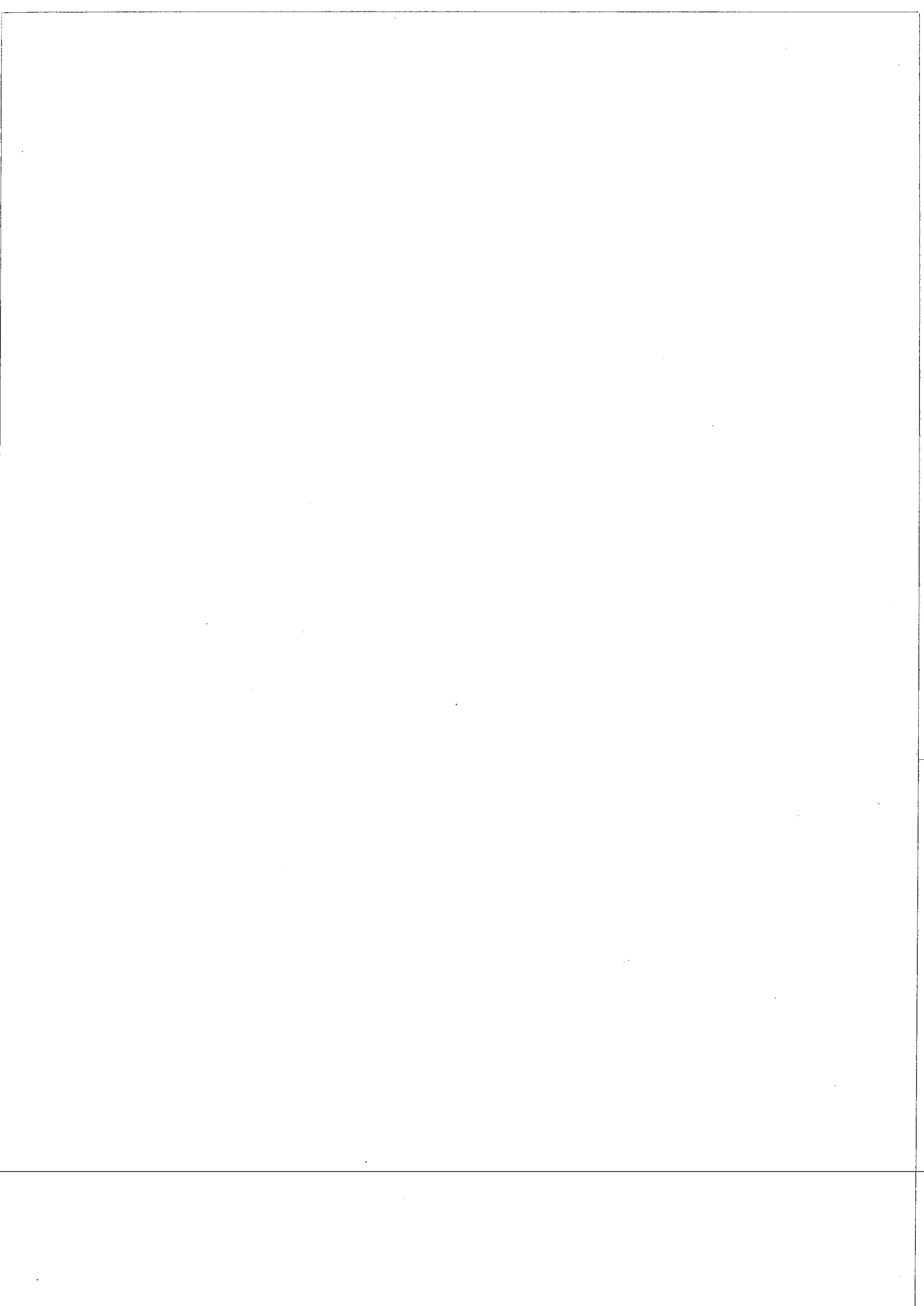
Statement by

**Mr. Ibrahim Osman**

**Deputy Secretary General**

**International Federation  
of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies**

Check against delivery



Mr President,

Thank you for giving me the floor to bring the perspectives of the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies into this important ministerial level debate.

The debate has gathered many contributions from governments on partnerships aimed at poverty eradication. The reference to the global partnership for development is important to us, for it ensures a concentration on the eighth Millennium Development Goal and

hunger.

The IFRC is a strong supporter of the objectives contained in the Millennium Declaration and the MDGs. Our own Global Agenda, which was adopted in 2005 at our own General Assembly in Seoul, creates a framework for action which is designed to support the achievement of the MDGs. Our work internationally with other organisations introduces

Cross and Red Crescent Societies use their role as auxiliaries to the public authorities in the humanitarian field to engage their governments and other partners on what must be done to meet humanitarian needs.

independence, neutrality and impartiality, as well as their role as a force for peace and

The themes for the International Conference all have a bearing on efforts to eradicate poverty and hunger, for they focus on the biggest challenges we are confronting here, it

Environmental hazards, including climate change. As has been clear from several  
discussions in this debate, the changes in world weather patterns and the increase in  
disasters originating in weather conditions is causing growing concern around the world,  
and especially noticeable trends in some countries which leave people starving and in dire

does it go to definitions. It is about the vulnerability which is rapidly increasing  
proportion of the world's population faces as trends accelerate population movement, for  
a host of reasons. Migration is closely linked to poverty, both at the departure and arrival  
stages of a migrant's journey, and needs to be accepted within this vulnerability context.

Violence in communities is a deeply troubling aspect of the modern world. We are  
witnessing decaying social conditions in many cities, and increasing violence brought on  
by a range of issues. The range is wide, but a common denominator in many situations is  
poverty and deprivation. It is in these circumstances that those who would foster  
violence for their own ends are able to succeed, and we believe this is an issue which  
deserves the attention of the Red Cross Red Crescent world.

The world is also threatened by a number of emerging and recurrent diseases. HIV has  
brought economic and social

This is the central approach in the IFRC Global Strategy 2002-2007

This Strategy was discussed extensively in May this year at one of our most important

the needs of the major challenges and charts a course for the future. One of the  
event this year was the signature of a new agreement between IFRC and WHO-AFRO,  
supplementing an existing

This cooperation from global to local levels is the secret to our success.  
There are many good examples of how we work in partnership with others, and there is  
not time to do more today than point to one: the Measles initiative launched by the IFRC  
in 2001 and now including a wide range of international organisations, governments,  
foundations and other players. It is a long-term commitment aimed at vaccinating

than 350 million children and cutting childhood deaths from this disease by more than 80% by 2015.

A common thread in the debates we held within the International Red Cross Movement is the importance of tackling these and similar issues with national resources. Our experience is that although in many cases external assistance is vital, cash alone does not provide any easy answers to challenges of this magnitude.

The essential element in any program to deal with poverty and other humanitarian challenges is the empowerment of the affected people and their communities, the empowerment of all groups in those communities, and the readiness of governments and other decision-makers to listen to the messages these communities send. A particular point of importance for us is the inequality which is always present alongside poverty, and the special vulnerability which results.

Programs must also address factors which retard or prevent development from taking place. This is why public health programs aimed at preventable diseases are essential, and why whole communities need to be involved in their design and implementation.

Desertification is an example. The Desertification Convention, adopted in 1994 and proclaimed the international year of Deserts and Desertification. Despite this, deserts are still treated with complacency, programs are seriously underfunded, and the work of governments and others is poorly coordinated.

Much of the work to combat desertification is similar to the work the Red Cross and Red

on preparedness, ten are saved at the response stage.

The Movement is not striving to look deeply into the causes of that phenomenon, but at the upcoming International Conference we shall try to coordinate our activities to address its humanitarian consequences. Together with other humanitarian partners, we shall make a call to the global community to protect the people most vulnerable to the impacts of climate change as well as other environmental challenges, in

the wider context of disaster risk reduction, conflict prevention and the implementation of the Millennium Development Goals.

So, for us in the Red Cross and Red Crescent, the key to the eradication of poverty and hunger is through the building of partnerships which include the affected communities themselves as groups empowered to make an effective contribution to the design, implementation and monitoring of programs which meet their needs.

These partnerships will help governments scale up national development, and this in turn will support actions which will make a significant contribution towards the achievement of the MDGs.

We have built several partnerships and alliances with this in mind. A recent example is our Global Alliance on HIV, which is currently seeking approximately \$250 million but which will link with national resources in southern Africa to sustain a program there which will make a real difference in favour of the communities impacted by the disease.

We are also carefully assessing the way the Red Cross Red Crescent should address the environmental consequences of climate change. The Netherlands Red Cross, through an agreement with the IFRC, manages the Red Cross Red Crescent Climate Centre in The Hague. The Centre held a major conference in The Hague a week ago with over 40  
Conference to be held in November in Geneva.

It quickly became apparent at the meeting that the investment gap between the richer and poorer nations is widening rapidly. Many developed countries have responded to recent news about climate change and global warming by taking measures and investing in their own national environmental security. Few have recognised that environmental security cannot be purchased for a nation state - it may be an issue with local impact but it requires global transboundary solutions.

M. D. ... this leads me back to a point to which I've referred several times, but I

are producing predictable lofty promises. Delivery on the promises is much harder to find. It is our hope in the IFRC that the new format you have chosen for ECOSOC will make it possible to link promises to delivery, but we know that this will require concerted

ater in the year.

Thank you.