



Asia Pacific Regional Office

**Speech of Xavier Castellanos
15th South East Asia Leadership meeting
Malaka, Malaysia, 10-11 of April, 2018**

Dear Red Cross Red Crescent Family from South East Asia,

In 2017, around 80 million people were affected by disasters, diseases or to displacement around Asia Pacific.

Within this period of time, the IFRC launched 9 international emergency appeals in addition to 9 disaster response emergency funds (DREF). For those 18 operations, in mounting a regional or international response team, we mobilized 52 Regional Disaster Response team members, composed by specialised staff or volunteers from Asia Pacific, and composed of a total 28 males and 24 females.

The emergency response operations in 2017 included responses to population movement, epidemics, cold waves, volcano eruptions, floods, cyclones and earthquakes.

The overall coverage of IFRC emergency appeals in 2017 reached 79%.

Meanwhile, in the region, non-communicable diseases remain the highest deadly risk with high economic impact.

Last year, the day before the Statutory meetings, corruption cases affecting Ebola operation broke up in the news, which resulted in decisive reinforcement of IFRC commitment to applying a Zero tolerance policy on fraud and corruption.

More recently, OXFAM sexual scandal brought to light a huge concern that has shaken the humanitarian sector, showing at the same time the vulnerability of institutions in preventing individuals to misuse or abuse of their power.

These two breaking news reminded that fraud, corruption and sexual abuses can affect the entire RCRC family composed of 191 national societies, IFRC and ICRC as well as the wider network of local branches and calling for a strong leadership at all levels to apply a zero tolerance policy.

Since our last Leadership Meeting, millions of people have tested and benefited from the power of humanity inspiring the RCRC work. We fed ourselves with the smile of those we have supported; we were paid back with the silent expressions of gratitude in the eyes of those people we exist for. We have been inspired by their resilience and energised to do more, do better and reach further. We have also be reminded of the need to remain humble and honest in applying our humanitarian mandate while being ambitious in our achievements, respectful of and grateful to the opportunity we have to serve others.



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The humanitarian challenges of today differ from the past in terms of scale, frequency and intensity of those hazards events.

At the same time, the future humanitarian challenges remain unknown although we can anticipate it will most certainly be multi-hazardous and on large scale. This will require a multi-sectoral response.

To address both today and future humanitarian challenges and needs, it is crucial to count with financially healthy national societies, as credible partners and with capacity to influence through humanitarian diplomacy in each country, at a local and national level, so as to maintain the humanitarian space open.

Maintaining relevant programs and services also requires national societies with less financial pressure to sustain their actions. The support from government authorities at the local and national level, as well as from the private sector and the whole society has become even more crucial for ensuring financial sustainability and delivering core programs and services. It is also an imperative for the work of the leadership of national societies.

In Asia Pacific, we count for 122,000 local RCRC branches performing humanitarian actions. We recognize that our collective work would not be possible without volunteers of all ages and good gender balance; volunteers given the space to engage across national society programmes, services and activities, in a safe environment that is conducive to join the RCRC and enjoy working in the humanitarian sector.

Our number of volunteers are decreasing. Volunteers have more options to join other organizations in the quest to feel useful in the humanitarian field. The RCRC called to assess their current dynamics for volunteering, and act towards creating opportunities for volunteering. This is imperative to prevent from losing volunteers which will affect our local reach..

A good friend and leader within South East Asia national societies use to seek our opinion as to 'How to make the Youth RC cool'? This is a pertinent question that requires an appropriated response and solution. It is also pertinent to ask ourselves, how to make accessible the RCRC national societies to people of all ages and enabled to do a relevant humanitarian and development work.

I hope we will take time to reflect on these issues in our two days meeting, through the agreed agenda, which includes the ASEAN strategy, the Regional Resilience Initiatives and our statutory meetings.



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Finally, let me gratefully thank the State of Malak for allowing us to be in this beautiful land and historic city of Malaka.

Warm thanks to Malaysian Red Crescent Society as well, for their unconditional support and collaboration with the IFRC in Malaysia and through Malaysia, to the Asia Pacific region. I congratulate the leadership, staff and volunteers of Malaysian Red Crescent Society for their extraordinary efforts in organizing this event.

Ladies and Gentlemen,
Many thanks