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**UNITED NATIONS GENERAL ASSEMBLY
62nd session**

Economic and Social Council Chamber

**Special Meeting on the
"Global Food Crisis"**

**THE INTERNATIONAL FEDERATION
OF RED CROSS AND RED CRESCENT SOCIETIES (IFRC)**

**Statement by
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Check against delivery

New York, 20 May 2008

FÉDÉRATION INTERNATIONALE DES SOCIÉTÉS DE LA CROIX-ROUGE ET DU CROISSANT-ROUGE

INTERNATIONAL FEDERATION OF RED CROSS AND RED CRESCENT SOCIETIES

FEDERACIÓN INTERNACIONAL DE SOCIEDADES DE LA CRUZ ROJA Y DE LA MEDIA LUNA ROJA

الاتحاد الدولي لجمعيات الصليب الأحمر والهلال الأحمر

Mr. President, Excellencies, thank you for the opportunity to contribute to this important debate.

While the doubling in global food prices requires an urgent response from the international community, at the same time we also have to look beyond the short-term aspects of the issue.

First of all, the factors driving this price hike are not about to disappear. Population pressures and domestic demands in emerging economies will continue to increase. Climate change will further accelerate in the coming years, with a growing risk of failing harvests and more people in need of food aid. Increasing demand will continue to outstrip failing supply.

Secondly, despite the fact that the international community committed itself to drastically cut food insecurity through the Millennium Development Goals, malnutrition has continued to rise in Africa and elsewhere, fuelled by the combined effects of poverty, climate change, HIV/AIDS, conflict and increased population growth.

It is in this context that we share the ICRC's concerns over the fact that while conflict and insecurity lay at the roots of the food crisis, it has potential in its consequences to effect a further spiraling of insecurity, instability, and conflict. And if the current crisis continues to deteriorate, the situation of the most vulnerable, and, for example, people in detention, will be greatly aggravated.

There is an immediate need to muster an effective global response, addressing also the longer-term aspects of food security. Policies promoting bio-fuel need to be revisited, trade agreements reviewed and better food banks established. However, these macro-level interventions have to be integrated with actions at the local, micro-level.

Mr. President, the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies represents a global network of 186 National Societies, whose volunteers help equip communities to prepare for, respond to, and recover from, disasters. Communities are, therefore, our natural partners.

Beyond ongoing emergency interventions, last month, the IFRC launched a new five year food security plan for Africa. With an initial budget of 43.5 million USD, 80 per cent of which will be spent on direct, integrated country-level programming, benefiting some 2.25 million people (or around half a million families). An appeal will be issued in July, and programs will begin from October.

This initiative will enable 15 Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies in Africa to develop the capacity, skills and resources they need to have a positive, lasting impact on food security by reaching at least 20 per cent of the most vulnerable people in their communities with long-term food security solutions, like microfinance, small-scale irrigation schemes and community-based food security monitoring systems, thereby improving their ability to cope with shocks like drought, for example.

The participating National Societies are in Burkina-Faso, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Ethiopia, Kenya, Lesotho, Malawi, Mali, Mauritania, Namibia, Niger, Rwanda, Sudan, Swaziland, Uganda and Zambia. Governments are also our partners since National Societies are auxiliaries to their governments in humanitarian matters, albeit as independent entities in their own right.

Mr. President, it is tragic that so many millions of people are going hungry, yet it is encouraging that food security is now high on the international agenda. Now is the time for governments, but also the UN, NGOs and the Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement to come together and build a comprehensive and sustainable solution. Rest assured, we are committed to doing our utmost to contribute to this.

I thank you, Mr. President.