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**World Humanitarian Summit**

**One Humanity, Shared Responsibilities: Evidence for Religious Groups’ Contributions to Humanitarian Response**

**Panel: Acting on the Evidence. Question for the panel: “**
*"Given the current evidence for religious contributions to humanitarian assistance, what specific actions are needed to more fully engage and integrate religious communities and local faith-based organisations into humanitarian response mechanisms?"*

**Shahabeddin Mohammadi Araghi, Under Secretary General, Iranian Red Crescent Society, speaking on behalf of the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies.**

**May 23, 8:30-10am. Rumeli Hall 6, Lufti Kirdar Convention and Exhibition Center**

**IFRC Message**

* The Fundamental Principles outline the ethical basis on which all Red Cross and Red Crescent volunteers and staff engage in humanitarian action to prevent and alleviate suffering , and ensure respect for the human being. These Principles include Humanity, Impartiality, Neutrality, Independence, Voluntary service, Unity and Universality This is particularly true of our first two principles:
* **Humanity:** *“[The Movement]’s purpose is to protect life and health and to ensure respect for the human being. It promotes mutual understanding, friendship, cooperation and lasting peace amongst all peoples.”*
* **Impartiality:** *“[The Movement] makes no discrimination as to nationality, race, religious beliefs, class or political opinions. It endeavours to relieve the suffering of individuals, being guided solely by their needs, and to give priority to the most urgent cases of distress.”*
* Our principles, are not directly established on the specific religious instructions, but have roots in the ethical principles and values which are shared by many religions, faiths and beliefs. We can find many parallels in the codes of ethical discipline and conduct espoused in many religion texts which predate the development of the modern humanitarianism.
* These expressions of a “humanitarian imperative” across religious texts and in humanitarian principles demonstrates that the wish to alleviate suffering of others, born out of a respect for common human dignity is a sentiment that is universal. The striking universality of this altruistic intention is one of the factors which makes it possible for our Red Cross Red Crescent Movement to be so remarkably universal.
* Engaging in humanitarian work is a way in which the wish to help one’s fellow human being can be expressed, without necessarily linking this to a religious context or belief system, for those who choose not to express this wish in that way – and indeed those who are prevented from doing so in contexts where religion or particular religious beliefs are restricted.
* Focussing on the shared goal of alleviating suffering and respecting human dignity, and recognising and capitalising on this commonality of spirit constitutes a very solid foundation on the basis of which effective cooperation can be built.
* From this cooperation issues of social exclusion can be more effectively tackled, both in terms of ensuring equality of access to services at the community level, and especially in terms of combined awareness raising and advocacy to change the behaviours and attitudes in the community and all levels of society which lead to excluding one group for the benefit of another.
* Sometimes the groups who are discriminated against are minority religious groups. Inspired by our principle of impartiality, the IFRC and its member National Societies also engage in community-based work and advocacy on preventing religious intolerance.
* For example, the flagship initiative to build a culture of non-violence and peace, “Agents of Behavioural Change”, includes many activities to cultivate non-discrimination and tolerance. Almost 2,000 “peer educators” have been trained, and have in turn reached approximately 120,000 people with related activities.