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**16th ERNA Annual General Meeting**

***“Volunteering, HIV and TB”***

**Tbilisi, 15-18 September, 2012**

**Final Statement**

**Preamble**

Although HIV is stabilizing and declining globally, the epidemic in Eastern European and Central Asian countries continues to grow at an alarming and accelerating pace, mainly driven by injecting drug use. Tuberculosis also remains a long-lasting health and social issue in the Europe Zone, with eighteen countries sharing the 86% of the regional TB burden.

Both epidemics are spreading rapidly within most-at-risk and highly stigmatized populations, such as people who use drugs, men who have sex with men, commercial sex workers, transgendered people, prisoners, migrants, as well as indigenous minorities, who in many national contexts have restrictive to no access to health services.

In recent years, National Societies in Europe and Central Asia have put increasing efforts into addressing the humanitarian impact of HIV and TB, by promoting awareness among youth and the most vulnerable groups as well as the general population, advocating for universal access to prevention, treatment, and care services, fighting against stigma and discrimination and working on a change in mind-sets at community level.

What makes the Red Cross Red Crescent approach different from that of other organisations is its ability to bring knowledge, treatment and care to the people within their own communities through a network of worldwide trained community-based volunteers.

It is thanks to this unrivalled network that National Societies can bridge the gap between households and healthcare institutions, as well as decision- and policy-makers, thus reaching out to the most vulnerable and marginalized people in local communities.

The IFRC Volunteering Policy adopted by the 18th session of the General Assembly in 2011 recognises the value of volunteers primarily for their individual contributions, enthusiasm and commitment and for significantly improving the lives of vulnerable people. However, the potential of the millions of volunteers organized and mobilized through the National Societies in Europe is not yet fully recognized in the respective communities. Herein lies a decisive opportunity for all of us.

We, the National Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies of the Europe Zone and members of the European Network on HIV, AIDS and Tuberculosis (ERNA), therefore commit to:

1. **Strengthening volunteer-based HIV and TB-related peer education activities**
* We will establish a more solid evidence base on the impact of volunteers’ participation in our service delivery. This will, in turn, strengthen our advocacy efforts for a stronger inclusion of volunteers in our programmes;
* We will ensure the sustainability of programmes by boosting volunteers’ motivation and promoting their retention within the Red Cross Red Crescent;
* We will encourage knowledge sharing and consistent handover, so that, whenever volunteers decide to leave the organisation, we guarantee knowledge is maintained and continuity in the activities is ensured;
* We will ensure the inclusion of volunteers and vulnerable groups in Red Cross Red Crescent governance bodies and decision-making processes, as well as in the planning, monitoring, evaluation and reporting of all HIV and TB-related activities.
* We will highlight the importance of volunteers’ individual contribution in all activities and ensure that their roles are clearly defined;
1. **Reinforcing the role of youth in HIV and TB-related activities**
* We will improve training opportunities for young people, so as to better equip them to protect themselves against HIV and TB, and at the same time to enable them to have a stronger impact among their peers by providing them with peer-training tools and leadership opportunities;
* We will recognize youth as agents as behavioural change in their communities and empower them to lobby governments for a better recognition of their role and impact in tackling HIV and TB;
* We will find new ways of motivating and encouraging volunteering among youth;
1. **Strengthening the role of volunteers as agents of change in tackling stigma and discrimination**
* We will include, expand and reinforce a peer-support component in HIV and TB activities;
* We will ensure the inclusion and active involvement of representatives of vulnerable groups in all our activities, and encourage as well as empower them to actively volunteer;
* We will ensure psychosocial support to volunteers involved in outreach activities to vulnerable groups;
1. **Building the capacities of Red Cross Red Crescent volunteers according to their needs**
* We will conduct proper needs assessment;
* We will carry out trainings for volunteers based on the indentified needs and according to the requirements;
* We will conduct regular monitoring and evaluation of the outcomes in order to quantify the extent of the impact of the activities on the target population, to be used as a basis for future planning.
1. **Boosting the role of ERNA in building and maintaining strategic partnerships**
* We will invest into building, developing, nurturing and maintaining strategic partnerships with external organisations working in the field of HIV, TB and related activities, and make sure that joint commitments and initiatives are followed up to and brought forward together;
* We will encourage the integration of existing national and local activities working along the same lines, so as to avoid parallelism and overlapping, and maximize their impact.