Joint statement of the
International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC)
and the
International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC)

“Humanitarian Impact of Nuclear weapons” conference
Vienna, 9 December 2014

CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY!

It is an honour to speak on behalf of the ICRC and the IFRC – the entire Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement. Our Movement is united in its message to States and the global community on nuclear weapons. Even though only a few states currently possess nuclear weapons, they are a concern to all states. Nuclear weapons and their terrible humanitarian consequences threaten the existence of each and every one of us and therefore concern us all – individually and collectively. Each of us should be deeply troubled about this terrible threat that has the potential to end life on earth and turn our world into a cold and poisonous wasteland. They can only bring us to a catastrophic and irreversible scenario that no one wishes and to which no one can respond in any meaningful way.

Responding to disasters is part of the everyday work of the Red Cross Red Crescent Movement, be they natural or man-made. We know very well how to respond to most known types of emergencies and their risks. Yet what we have again heard on the impact of a nuclear detonation or even large-scale nuclear war shows very clearly that this type of risk is in a totally different realm. To us, the conclusion from these days is that there is only one acceptable way forward: the complete elimination of such weapons.

Another session discussed the existing international legal norms. It is easy to make two conclusions: that there is no other weapon with such terrible and indiscriminate effects and that weapons with even lesser humanitarian impacts have been banned.

Faced with what we now know about the consequences of a nuclear detonation we have a responsibility to use the 70th anniversary of the atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki next year to act on this knowledge. It is our common duty to ensure that the threat of nuclear weapons and the inhuman consequences of their use are eliminated. All other weapons of mass destruction, namely chemical and biological weapons have been banned. Nuclear weapons – which have far worse consequences than those weapons – must now be specifically prohibited and eliminated as a matter of urgency. We reiterate our call from 2011 and appeal to you all: to ensure that nuclear weapons are never again used and to pursue in good faith and conclude with urgency and determination negotiations to prohibit the use of and completely eliminate nuclear weapons through a legally binding international agreement, based on your existing commitments and international obligations.