Preface

Making the Voice of Humanity Heard. This sums up the role of the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement. The Movement serves people in vulnerable positions and makes their voice heard. Without the Red Cross and Red Crescent victims of disasters, diseases and armed conflicts would be in a far more deplorable situation.

Over the past eight years HRH Princess Margriet of the Netherlands has played a dynamic and leading role in the Standing Commission of the Red Cross and Red Crescent as its Chair. In this position, she has served at the very heart of the Movement. Princess Margriet once explained that ‘The Commission is not a “decoration” or an “elephants’ graveyard” as it has sometimes been referred to. It is a forum for building harmony and cooperation, for examining issues of concern for the Movement as a whole…’. She encouraged the Movement time and again ‘to be much bolder, more creative and more decisive’ and ‘to stay on the move – as a Movement’. Throughout her tenure she reminded all that the global Movement works locally: ‘It is at the grassroots level that we make an impact and where we learn our hardest lessons’. ‘If we in Geneva were to lose touch with the day-to-day realities in communities around the world, our work – the work we do for the Movement – would be for nothing’.

With the end of her tenure in December 2003, a page in the history of the Movement will be turned. It serves as a fitting moment and a good opportunity to pay tribute to the Princess’s work for humanity through the Movement. As a token of gratitude for her endeavours, we felt that it would be appropriate to invite colleagues, friends and experts to contribute to a special collection of essays. This book is the result of that effort. It examines the two main areas of work of the Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement, i.e., humanitarian assistance and international humanitarian law. These key areas and a multitude of questions relating to them have been on the agenda throughout Princess Margriet’s chairmanship of the Standing Commission and deserve greater consideration.

We are thrilled that so many people from all over the world were willing to contribute a scholarly or inspirational essay to this publication. It is a
clear sign of the profound respect and friendship the authors feel for Princess Margriet. The authors shed their personal light on various aspects of the Movement. Many come from the Movement and serve in varying capacities at different levels. Others come from governments or external partners who work closely with the Movement. Some have been associated in the past with the Movement or Princess Margriet. In their essays the authors have written about issues close to their hearts, or questions within their fields of expertise. The essays differ considerably. Some are primarily descriptive whereas others are clearly taking a stand on contemporary issues. The book is as diverse as the Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement itself.

The appendices include the latest version of the Statutes of the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement, the never before published Rules of Procedure of the Standing Commission of the Red Cross and Red Crescent and a list of Chairpersons of the Standing Commission.

As editors, we have had the privilege of working with the authors. We have prepared this book with great pleasure and enthusiasm. It is our joy to donate the royalties of this volume to two humanitarian funds described on pages 527-528. May this publication serve as a reminder that the voices of the victims of disasters, diseases and armed conflicts must continue to be heard.

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