

Ministry of Foreign Affairs – Permanent Mission of Denmark to the United Nations Office in Geneva

Meeting in the Council for Development Policy on 21 November 2024

Agenda Item No. 4

- 1. Overall purpose:** *For discussion and recommendation to the Minister*
- 2. Title:** Organisation Strategy for Denmark's Engagement with the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) 2025-2028
- 3. Amount:** DKK 340 million (2025-2028)
- 4. Presentation for Programme Committee:** 10 September 2024
- 5. Previous Danish support presented to UPR:** 29 November 2018

Danish Organisation Strategy for ICRC

Introduction:

ICRC was established as a private association under Swiss law in 1863. Today, it has a status equivalent to that of an international organisation in order to fulfil its humanitarian mandate and mission. ICRC is an impartial, neutral and independent humanitarian organisation working globally to protect and assist the victims of armed conflict and other situations of violence. ICRC is formally recognized in the Geneva Conventions, their Additional Protocols, the Statutes of the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement, and by the International Conferences of the Red Cross and Red Crescent.

Key results:

- Protection and humanitarian assistance delivered by the ICRC has a relevant and sustainable impact for affected people.
- Behaviour of parties to conflict is influenced to prevent violations of International Humanitarian Law (IHL) and alleviate human suffering.
- Based on the leveraging of synergies between humanitarian and development efforts, affected people's vulnerabilities are reduced and their self-reliance is enhanced.
- Strengthen ICRC's engagement in integrating climate and environmental risks into its work.

Justification for support:

- ICRC's work is well aligned with key Danish priorities on protecting victims of armed conflict and delivering humanitarian assistance to vulnerable affected populations.
- ICRC is the guardian and promoter of IHL and interacts with states parties to the Geneva Conventions as well non-state armed groups.
- ICRC's operations in protracted conflicts is aligned with Denmark's objective to consider longer-term consequences from the onset of a crisis and strengthen the coherence between humanitarian action and development efforts.
- ICRC's frontline humanitarian action is a stabilising factor and a building-block for peace.

How will we ensure results and monitor progress:

- Monitoring of Danish priority areas is based on ICRC's own reporting on its strategy for 2024-2027.
- Active participation in formal and informal meetings, thematic briefings, membership of the Donor Support Group and at the International Conference of the Red Cross and Red Crescent.
- Annual consultation on key priority areas.

Danish involvement in governance structure:

- Denmark is part of the Donor Support Group.
- Denmark actively participates in the International Conference of the Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement

File No.	24/19161					
Responsible Unit	FN-Genève					
	<i>Mill.</i>	2025	2026	2027	2028	Total
Commitment		85	85	85	85	340
Projected ann. Disb.		85	85	85	85	340
Duration of strategy	2025-2028					
Finance Act code.	06.39.01.14					
Desk officer	Aino Askgaard					
Financial officer	Alberte Sofie Linde Forsell Mads Ettrup					

SDGs relevant for Programme*



* Overall goal to *leave no one behind*

Budget

Core voluntary funding	340 million DKK
Total*	340 million DKK

*Subject to annual parliamentary approval

Risk and challenges:

- Financial and political support to principled humanitarian action.
- ICRC's humanitarian neutrality
- Humanitarian space and staff security.
- Fraudulent acts and sexual exploitation and abuse.

Strategic objective(s)

Contribute to the achievement of the Danish strategy "The World We Share", including protection of the most vulnerable, effective access to protection and life-saving assistance as well as prevention and reduction of violence and conflict.

Priority Areas

1. Protection and delivery of essential services to people affected by conflict
2. Promotion and compliance with IHL
3. Synergies between humanitarian and development efforts (HDP-nexus)
4. Climate and conflict
5. Enhance organisational efficiency and effectiveness of the ICRC

Core information

Established	1863
HQ	Geneva
President	Mirjana Spoljaric Egger
Human Resources	16.500 staff
Country presence	Over 90 countries



**MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS
OF DENMARK**
Danida

**Organisation Strategy for Denmark's Engagement with the
International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC)**

2025 – 2028

November 2024

I. Objective

This Strategy for the Cooperation between Denmark and the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) forms the basis for the Danish contribution to ICRC, and it is the central basis for Denmark's dialogue and partnership with ICRC for 2025-2028. It sets up Danish priority areas for ICRC's performance within the overall framework established by ICRC's own institutional strategy 2024-2027 (see text box 5). In addition, it outlines specific goals and results that Denmark will pursue in its cooperation with the ICRC. The strategy will be supplemented by a Multilateral Partnership Agreement for the period 2025-2028 between Denmark and ICRC. The timeframe of the strategy is set to end one year after the current ICRC strategy with the aim to ensure alignment with a new ICRC strategy. The direction and content of the Strategy is informed by Denmark's Strategy for Development Cooperation, "The World We Share", and the associated how-to-notes, especially the note on "Denmark as a Humanitarian Actor", as well as ICRC's "Institutional Strategy 2024-2027" published in December 2023.

The strategy contributes to reaching some of Denmark's key objectives set out in the overall Danish strategy "The World We Share", including protection of the most vulnerable, effective access to protection and life-saving assistance as well as prevention and reduction of violence and conflict.

Priority areas for the strategy are summarized in text box 1 and explained in section IV below.

Text box 1:

Priority areas for Denmark's cooperation with ICRC:

1. Protection and delivery of essential services to people affected by conflict
2. Promotion and compliance with IHL
3. Synergies between humanitarian and development efforts/Sustainable Humanitarian Impact (HDP-nexus)
4. Climate and conflict
5. Enhance organisational efficiency and effectiveness of the ICRC

II. The organisation

The ICRC is a neutral, impartial, and independent humanitarian organization working globally to protect and assist the victims of armed conflict and other situations of violence. It is mandated by the international community to be the guardian and promoter of International Humanitarian Law (IHL). The ICRC also works on influencing behavior to prevent violations of IHL, addressing the failure of infrastructures such as health in frontlines and other areas heavily affected by armed conflict, delivering more sustainable solutions and supporting affected communities in strengthening coping mechanisms. The ICRC has its headquarters in Geneva and with offices in more than 90 countries, employing around 16,500 staff. ICRC's five largest operations in 2023 are listed in text box 2. An organigram for the ICRC is presented in Annex 1.

The ICRC is part of the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement, which also comprises 191 National Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, including the Danish Red Cross, and the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC). ICRC is not a member state organisation but a private association established under Swiss law in

Text box 2:

ICRC's five largest operations in 2023:

- Ukraine (CHF 245.5 mio.)
- Afghanistan (CHF 153.5 mio.)
- Syria (CHF 132.9 mio.)
- Yemen (CHF 113.2 mio.)
- South Sudan (CHF 90.6 mio.)

1863. The ICRC is formally recognised in the Geneva Conventions of 1949 and their Additional Protocols as well as in the Statutes of the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement, and by the International Conferences of the Red Cross and Red Crescent.

ICRC's mandate

ICRC's exclusively humanitarian mission is to protect the lives and dignity of victims of armed conflict and other situations of violence and to provide them with assistance. It also endeavors to prevent suffering by promoting and strengthening IHL and universal humanitarian principles.

Furthermore, in armed conflicts and other situations of violence, the ICRC acts as a co-convenor with the national society to organize the humanitarian response, including from other Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement partners.

As per its mandate enshrined in international law, the role of ICRC is to act in the event of international armed conflict. In international and non-international armed conflicts, IHL gives the ICRC - like other impartial humanitarian organisations - a right of humanitarian initiative, which entitles it to offer its services in order to assist and protect victims in the absence of law and rights. In addition to providing humanitarian assistance and protection in areas where many other actors do not have access, the ICRC distinguishes itself from other humanitarian organisations by having the right to visit prisoners of war and civilian internees as well as carrying out family reunifications. Additionally, the ICRC is mandated to work for the faithful application of IHL in armed conflicts and to further the understanding of IHL. The ICRC is also part of the world's largest humanitarian network through the Red Cross Movement.

Governance of the ICRC

The President who leads the ICRC is part of and guided by the Assembly. The Assembly is the ICRC's supreme governing body comprised by between 15 and 25 elected Swiss nationals. The President, the Vice-President and the rest of the Assembly have the overall responsibility for the organization and formulates policy, defines general objectives and strategy, and approves the budget and accounts. The President represents the ICRC on the international scene, bears primary responsibility for ICRC's external relations and conducts ICRC's humanitarian diplomacy in close cooperation with the Director-General. The directorate is led by the Director-General and is the ICRC's executive body, responsible for implementing and overseeing the institutional strategy and general objectives defined by the Assembly. It is also responsible for managing ICRC staff and ensuring the smooth running of the organization.

The ICRC is not a member state organization but a private association under Swiss law. Consequently, this limits Denmark's formal influence on decision-making of the ICRC. However, Denmark is exercising informal influence and giving recommendations through bilateral contacts and through Denmark's membership of ICRC's Donor Support Group (DSG). The DSG consists of the major donors, defined by those providing more than CHF 10 million in annual cash contribution, which in 2024 amounted to 24 donors. Denmark participates in regular meetings where senior representatives from the ICRC and the major donors discuss a wide range of policy and operational issues in order to strengthen mutual understanding and the work of ICRC. Donors are able to give guidance and influence on ICRC's overall direction, as for example its strategy. This was e.g. the case when donors were invited to give input to the process of developing ICRC's Institutional Strategy for 2024-2027. The role as chair of the

group rotates among the members, and is also an opportunity for agenda setting. Denmark last held the chair in 2013, and will seek to become chair during the period of the new strategy. As mentioned, Denmark also has a close bilateral dialogue with the ICRC on a number of strategic priority areas at both Geneva and MFA HQ level.

Furthermore, indirect influence can also be exerted via the Danish Red Cross through which a portion of the Danish funding the ICRC is channeled. This arrangement has helped the Danish Red Cross obtain a privileged partnership with ICRC. The two organisations have a strategic framework agreement (2024-2028) and enjoy a well-functioning and extensive operational collaboration in more than 10 field operations, primarily in Africa and Asia with an important focus on the development of sustainable national societies (Branch Development) in Africa. This partnership is also mutually beneficial on humanitarian policy matters. Finally, it is enabling promising private sector partnerships.

Governance and oversight of the ICRC is overseen through the three lines oversight model defined by the Institute of Internal Auditors. This includes 1) Staff, managers, subject-matter experts in departments, divisions, regions and delegations, 2) Ethics, Risk and Compliance Office, and 3) Internal Audit. External auditors are included as a fourth element.

The ICRC has instituted robust systems including a fraud risk management strategy from 2023 and a dedicated fraud prevention officer in 2024. The systems for reporting has been updated and the number of reported cases of corruption has due to this increased. There has been an increased focus on follow-up, education and handling of cases of misuse. In 2023 the ICRC introduced its first global strategy on prevention of sexual exploitation, abuse and harassment (PSEAH) with focus on promotion of change in organizational culture and behavior, mainstreaming PSEAH in operational activities and strengthening the victim centered approach. The full roll out of this strategy is of key importance.

International Conference of the Red Cross and Red Crescent

Every fourth year the Red Cross and the Red Crescent Movement hosts the International Conference of the Red Cross and Red Crescent. The most recent was held in October 2024 in Geneva. The participants to the conference are all 196 States party to the Geneva Conventions and all Movement components: ICRC, IFRC and the 191 national Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies. A range of other humanitarian and development actors also participate as observers, including regional and international organisations, the United Nations and several of its specialized agencies, non-governmental organisations, academic institutions and others. As an important global humanitarian forum, the conference aims to inspire policy debate on humanitarian issues. The Conference adopts formal decisions (resolutions) on relevant humanitarian topics, for instance on compliance with IHL, and pledges can be made.

ICRC's financial resources

The ICRC exclusively depends on voluntary contributions from a variety of sources. ICRC's budget for 2024 amounts to CHF 2.1 billion of which CHF 244 mio. are allocated to headquarter functions (11%) while the main part of CHF 1.9 billion (89%) is for ICRC's field budget. Denmark's core contribution is allocated to the field budget except for an overhead cost of 6,5% to the headquarter.

ICRC's final budget for 2023 including budget extensions for some operations ended up at CHF 2.52 mia. while contributions amounted to CHF 2.42. The funding sources and patterns in 2023 were similar to previous years: governments and the European Commission provided 82% (CHF 1.9 billion) of all resources, while National Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies provided 2% (CHF 48 mio.), and private and public sources (incl. supra/international organisations) amounted to 16% (CHF 369 mio.). The top donors to the ICRC in 2023 are listed in text box 3. In 2023, 31% of the funds that ICRC received were un-earmarked and 10% loosely earmarked. The ICRC estimates that ideally 40% of the contributions it receives annually should be unearmarked or loosely earmarked. This would allow the ICRC to balance the earmarked contributions with the evolving needs and mitigate the risk of a few contexts becoming overfunded while other contexts are underfunded.

Text box 3:

Top donors in 2023 (in CHF):

1. USA – 504 mio.
 2. Germany – 260 mio.
 3. Switzerland – 220 mio.
 4. European Commission – 163 mio.
 5. UK – 148 mio.
- These five donors contributed to 54% of the funding
13. Denmark – 32 mio.

The ICRC experienced a challenging financial situation in 2023 due to several factors including heavy earmarking of contributions at the beginning of the war in Ukraine, significant inflation leading to an increase in costs across many of its major expenditure categories, a surge in needed capacity to respond post-Covid as well as a reduction in contributions from some traditional donors. The original budget for 2023 was at record level at an initial CHF 2.8 billion but due to funding shortfalls at the end of 2022 it was reduced already during the first quarter of the year to CHF 2.4 billion. ICRC was able to attain financial stability as a result of the accompanying cost cutting measures including downsizing of certain operations and the initial reduction of staff by approximately 1800 persons worldwide, combined with several donors and private entities that answered the urgent appeal for extraordinary contributions. Further positions were reduced in 2024 including reducing the number of directors with one person leading to a total reduction of 4000 positions. The budget for 2024 was reduced to reflect the donor landscape and implied reduced operational footprint.

III. Lessons learned, key strategic challenges and opportunities

Partner assessment

In 2022 Denmark engaged an independent consultant to carry out a Mid-Term Review of Denmark's organisation strategy for cooperation with the ICRC. The review found that the strategy for Danish support to the ICRC remained relevant. The engagement aligns with foundational Danish policy priorities on IHL and a human rights and rule-based international order. The review found that the increasing need for principled humanitarian action underscores the continued overall relevance of Denmark's support and partnership with the ICRC.

The review also found an overall satisfactory progress for the ICRC, although a slow advance towards sustainable humanitarian impact (nexus). The ICRC budget implementation rates were found to be high (92, 87 and 84 % in 2019, 2020 and 2021). The numbers have since increased to 98 and 89 % in 2022 and 2023, and is expected to be 88 % for 2024.

The review pointed out that the ICRC's establishment of an Evaluation Office in 2021 to pursue organisational change processes to achieve the set objectives would help further evidence-based decision-making and humanitarian action in line with an outcome-based approach to programming.

ICRC has so far never been assessed by the Multilateral Organization Performance Assessment Network (MOPAN), but has now – after pressure from Denmark and like-minded countries - agreed to have an assessment. This is expected to take place in 2026, halfway through ICRC's current strategy.

Denmark has overall been satisfied with ICRC's achievements and continues to appreciate its added value in the humanitarian response by providing protection and assistance to victims of armed conflict as well as promoting and strengthening IHL and universal humanitarian principles.

Lessons learned

Denmark has a long-standing relationship with the ICRC, dating back to Denmark's signing of the 1949 Geneva Conventions and the membership of the Donor Support Group since its establishment in 1998. The objectives of the previous strategy between Denmark and the ICRC, which covered the period 2019-2024, focused on 1) protection, humanitarian assistance and compliance with IHL, 2) leveraging synergies between humanitarian and development efforts, 3) coherence in the areas of stabilisation and security, and 4) technological transformation and increased effectiveness. With regards to protection, assistance and IHL, ICRC has over the last years pursued its role as guardian of IHL in armed conflicts, protection of family links and visits to detentions, contact with armed groups (in 2023 61% of the 450 groups) as well as supported health and income support activities. Selected outcomes of ICRC activities are listed in text box 4.

ICRC activities also contributed to 36 state ratification of or accession to IHL treaties in 2023, to humanitarian exceptions for UN sanctions (UNSC resolution 2664) as well as to the political declaration on Explosive Weapons in Populated Areas in 2022. ICRC also progressed in leveraging synergies between humanitarian and development efforts (nexus), although this was slower than anticipated and was impacted by the financial situation. The ICRC and IFRC in 2021 formulated the Climate and Environment Charter for Humanitarian Organizations which is aimed at guiding the humanitarian sector's approach to the increasing risks resulting from climate change and to address its own carbon and environmental footprint, and has reached 445 signatories from humanitarian organisations including Red Cross and Red Crescent National Societies, and 13 State supporters.

Text box 4:

ICRC selected outcomes 2023:

124,387 Red Cross Messages collected
816 people reunited with their families
39,762 new tracing requests
1,396 unaccompanied minors and separated children reunited with their families
885 places of detention holding 837,000 people visited
22,624 detainees visited individually
2.6 mio. people benefitted from food consumption
3.2 mio. people benefitted from income support
679 health centres supported
734 hospitals supported

ICRC has during the recent years progressed in working with other actors to enhance the impact of their operations, including with the rest of the Red Cross Movement, the UN, and the international finance institutions (IFIs) including the World Bank, and through these increased efforts on stabilization and security. Technological transformation in the form of cybersecurity and data protection has been a priority for the ICRC since a major data breach in 2022, including establishment in 2022 of an office for cyberspace where digital services can be tested as well as engagement with stakeholders on new technologies in warfare.

In addition to maintaining priorities from the previous Danish strategy on protection and assistance, IHL and synergies between humanitarian and development efforts, the 2025-28 Strategy will add a priority on climate and conflict as well as a priority on enhancing organisational efficiency and effectiveness of the ICRC.

Key strengths

The ICRC has a leading normative role with regard to IHL. This includes monitoring the changing nature of armed conflict and organising consultations with a view to reaching agreement on new use of the normative rules such as the Geneva Conventions of 1949 (and their Additional Protocols) which remain the most widely-ratified treaties to this day.

The ICRC uses its unique position and mandate to effectively operate in situations of conflict. It engages in direct and confidential dialogue with state and non-state actors and through this, the ICRC is often the only humanitarian organisation able to access vulnerable populations. This is the case both for acute humanitarian response, where it operates simultaneously to meet immediate needs and for protracted crises where the ICRC mitigates longer-term impacts of conflict on critical infrastructure such as health and water. The ICRC has field presence in many key conflict contexts of specific interest to Denmark: Ukraine, Syria, Yemen, Afghanistan, Ethiopia, Somalia, DRC, and Israel and the Occupied Territories. Therefore, the ICRC will also be a critical partner to Denmark during the membership of the UN Security Council 2025-2026, where access to timely, independent and trustworthy information from conflict zones will strengthen Denmark's engagement in the Council.

The ICRC fulfills its obligations as a humanitarian actor. The ICRC's approach to humanitarian action guided by the principles of neutrality, impartiality and independence plays a vital role in ensuring that people affected by armed conflict can be accessed and protected. By adhering to the humanitarian principles, the ICRC helps ensure the preservation of humanitarian space which other humanitarian organisations also benefit from. The ICRC takes a people-centered approach ensuring that it is accountable to affected populations.

Challenges

The funding outlook, and in particular flexible core funding, is challenging the realization of the ICRC's strategic goals. As mentioned, the ICRC responded in 2023 to financial challenges by two parallel measures: a response plan to mitigate the financial situation and accelerating a new institutional strategy with an increased focus on strengthening of the protection activities and raising awareness of obligations under IHL. The new Institutional Strategy 2024-2027 (December 2023) reflects well the challenges of today with an increased multipolar, fragmented and divided world. The institutional strategy was developed through an extensive consultation process involving various stakeholders including States parties to the Geneva Conventions, multilateral institutions, donors, UN partners, international governmental and

non-governmental organisations, National Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, academic institutions, think tanks and ICRC staff. As part of responding to the financial situation, the ICRC in 2024 strengthened its financial management by organisational changes including upgrading the Chief Financial Officer at director level, and reducing the number of directors by one person.

In addition to the financial challenges in 2023, the ICRC has the last few years been exposed to challenges during the covid-19 pandemic, a cyber attack on the Central Tracing Agency, and an increase in misinformation, disinformation and hate speech questioning ICRC's impartiality, especially related to the conflict in Ukraine and in occupied Palestinian territories. The ICRC office for cyberspace in Luxembourg focuses on digital technologies and how they can be harnessed to effectively and securely serve people affected by conflict, including safe development and testing of new digital tools as well as digital solutions to protect humanitarian organisations.

Staff morale and wellbeing has also been a challenge. The 2023 review of the ICRC's strategy showed that the downsizing of the organization has had a negative impact on overall staff satisfaction, and an unsatisfactory result with regard to ICRC's orientation on Creating an Inclusive and Diverse Environment.

The financial situation also meant that ICRC was not able to deliver on its ambitious goals related to investments in evaluations in 2023. Evaluations and follow-up are important for Denmark, also in time of crisis, and Denmark will continue to work for ICRC to strengthen this area.

Opportunities

It is paramount for ICRC's ability to deliver on its mandate that its unique character is preserved, especially its independence. The ICRC has over the last years increased its coordination and collaboration with the larger humanitarian and development community, especially in protracted situations. However, the ICRC is still able to draw a line in this respect and maintain its independence when needed to avoid politicisation of its work. Denmark supports the ICRC's increased coordination with other humanitarian actors including the partners in the Red Cross Movement. The ICRC has a standing invitation to participate as an observer in the IASC, the inter-agency forum for coordination, policy development and decision-making for humanitarian partners. It engages regularly as an observer to ensure that the positions, plans and initiatives of peer humanitarian agencies are factored into ICRC's engagement. Also, there is regular bilateral engagement with key UN agencies on specific crises and thematic. ICRC's presence in fragile contexts combined with its unique role in relation to the development of and compliance with IHL is of value to the Danish Ministry of Foreign Affairs and to the Danish Ministry of Defence, both of which have ongoing dialogue with ICRC, supported by the Danish Red Cross. This makes continued support to the ICRC highly relevant.

There is a general impression among donors that the ICRC has been communicating with donors about the challenges it has faced in a timely and open manner, and also has responded with appropriate measures. The ICRC has introduced a new approach to monitor the institutional risks and the funding outlook in real time which makes the organisation more agile in acting on risks. Denmark has emphasized to the ICRC that communication plays a crucial

role in reducing risks as well as advocating for the organisation's mission. The ICRC has included communication as a cross-cutting approach in their new institutional strategy.

IV. Priority areas and results to be achieved

With its new Institutional Strategy (2024-2027) the ICRC renews its commitment to preserve the health and dignity of individuals affected by armed conflicts and other situations of violence. The ICRC distinguishes itself through a unique operational approach, which combines protection and essential services while promoting adherence to IHL. The Strategic Orientations of the institutional strategy is listed in text box 5. The strategy prioritises the strengthening of the ICRC's protection activities and raising awareness of obligations under international humanitarian laws among States and non-state armed groups. This matches well with Danish priorities in the Danish development strategy in relation to prevent and fight poverty and inequality, conflict and displacement, irregular migration and fragility.

Text box 5:

Strategic orientations of ICRC's Institutional Strategy:

1. Upholding the centrality of protection and the role of a neutral intermediary
2. Promoting international humanitarian law as a global political priority
3. Enhancing the response impact in acute and protracted phases of conflicts, as well as other situations of violence
4. Affirming ICRC's identity within the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement
5. A new humanitarianism for a changing world
6. Optimizing risk management and financial stability
7. Accelerating the digital transformation
8. Enhancing skills, trust, cohesion and responsibility

The ICRC's priorities are to a large extent in line with Danish priorities for humanitarian and development assistance. The Danish cooperation with the ICRC will contribute to the achievement of Agenda 2030's commitment to good health and well-being (SDG3), gender equality (SDG5), clean water and sanitation (SDG6), peace, justice and strong institutions (SDG16).

Denmark fully supports the ICRC Institutional Strategy 2024-2027. The following five priority areas have been defined for Denmark's partnership and dialogue with the ICRC. The monitoring framework in annex 2 provides an overview of related ICRC priorities and indicators.

Priority area 1: Protection and delivery of essential services to people affected by conflict

Protection of people affected by armed conflict is a core function of the ICRC. ICRC's protection activities aim at reducing risks and vulnerabilities, and to uphold the rights of civilians, prisoners of war, detainees, missing persons, the wounded and sick, victims of sexual violence and other affected people. These efforts are complemented by the delivery of humanitarian aid, support to essential services and prevention activities.

This priority area aligns with the implementation of the Danish priority regarding protecting victims of armed conflict and delivering humanitarian assistance to vulnerable affected populations, including in some of the least accessible areas in various conflicts. As the ICRC often is the only actor with access, it is of particular importance to Denmark that the ICRC prioritises resources to its protection activities. The ICRC's protection and assistance response

includes a focus on the specific vulnerabilities of women and girls and on addressing prevention and needs resulting from sexual and gender-based violence. Furthermore, the ICRC is an important health actor, and Denmark particularly appreciates its work on building stronger health systems in conflict areas, including addressing non-communicable diseases and its investments in mental health and psychosocial support.

Conflict dynamics are becoming more complex and respect for the neutrality of humanitarian actors is increasingly challenged. The increased need for a principled humanitarian approach underscores ICRC's relevance. The ICRC contributes to upholding the neutrality and the protection of humanitarian actors and access to affected populations through protection dialogue with the parties to a conflict. The ICRC's role as a neutral intermediary contributes to humanitarian considerations in negotiations and attempts at resolving disputes between the parties.

Denmark is committed to support the ICRC through humanitarian diplomacy where useful, and in full respect of their neutral role. Both the focus on vulnerabilities of women and girls and on health are in line with core Danish priorities, and Denmark will work to support the ICRC in efficiently carry out its mandate to protect civilians in armed conflict. The ICRC's responses align well with the Danish priorities in the Security Council: 1) Adapting conflict responses and prevention, 2) Climate and Security and 3) Women, Peace & Security.

Priority area 2: Promotion and compliance with IHL

The ICRC is the guardian and promoter of IHL and interacts with states parties to the Geneva Conventions as well as with non-state armed groups. The ICRC is promoting IHL as a global political priority. In post-conflict phases the ICRC's responsibilities under IHL includes secure release of prisoners of war and to visit detainees, search for missing persons, ensure proper management of the dead, strengthen resilience of displaced people and address the issue of weapon contamination. As the ICRC, for some of these activities, is the only actor able to act, it is important to Denmark that these activities are at the core of the ICRC.

ICRC's communication on the importance of IHL supports its operational efforts in prevention, protection and assistance. In conjunction with humanitarian diplomacy and policy dialogue, communication plays a crucial role in advocating for the organization's mission, and for humanitarian access to people in need. Communication is important in managing security and perception challenges for the ICRC and emphasizes the respect for the ICRC's neutrality. Especially, misinformation, disinformation and hate speech can have damaging effect on ICRC's possibilities for fulfilling its mandate.

Denmark will continue to work with the ICRC to ensure that there is respect for its neutral and impartial humanitarian role and for the Red Cross emblem and is committed to support where it is helpful on policy level through humanitarian diplomacy. ICRC's principled humanitarian approach is in line with Denmark's adherence to the humanitarian principles. As a member of the Security Council 2025-2026, Denmark will work consistently across the range of issues on the Security Council agenda to defend international law, including international humanitarian law and human rights law.

Priority area 3: Synergies between humanitarian and development efforts/Sustainable Humanitarian Impact (HDP-nexus)

Under ICRC's new Institutional Strategy for 2024-2027 the ICRC will enhance the response impact in acute and protracted phases of conflicts, taking into account the vulnerabilities and abilities of the affected people, and the capabilities of local and international actors. In long-standing conflicts the ICRC focuses on sustainable impact and in addition to humanitarian aid also supports institutions in sectors such as health, food production, water, detention and legal issues. Promotion of sustainable solutions is key for Denmark's development and humanitarian approach, and ICRC's response contributes to the Danish priority of lifesaving humanitarian response including health.

The ICRC focuses on building resilience, more systematic responses and more sustainable humanitarian interventions (HDP-nexus). Reflections on when other actors can take over engagement from the ICRC and ensure hand-over strategies for its operations are important to ensure an efficient response. The Red Cross and Red Crescent National Societies can play an important role in the humanitarian response, as well as in the hand-over from the ICRC to other.

Denmark will support ICRC's ongoing constructive engagement with major development actors. Denmark has a particular interest in enabling strong collaboration between the ICRC and major actors such as the World Bank and the European Commission. Denmark will encourage the ICRC to maintain effective humanitarian aid and build sustainability and resilience in the most difficult contexts, in particular where access is limited for other humanitarian actors. Denmark will also support the ICRC's efforts to strengthen local partnerships including the Red Cross and Red Crescent National Societies' capabilities and support in delivering principled and relevant responses to achieve greater and sustainable humanitarian impact (HDP-nexus).

Priority area 4: Climate and conflict

Climate change exacerbates resource scarcity which could lead to both increasing conflicts as well as migration, and thereby placing further strains on the ICRC and the humanitarian system in general.

Countries in conflict are at the top of climate vulnerability charts¹. Conflicts harm the foundations of societies, which in turn limits people's capacity to adapt to a changing climate: conflicts weaken institutions and essential services, disrupt the economy, undermine social cohesion and damage the environment on which people rely to survive. This hinders climate adaptation and makes people extremely vulnerable to all types of risks, including climate ones. The countries where the ICRC has the largest operations (such as Afghanistan, Yemen, and South Sudan) are all characterised by high vulnerability and generally also have the lowest capacity for responding to climate-induced loss and damage.

In "The World we share" preventing and fighting conflict and leading the fight to stop climate change are two central priorities. The ICRC works actively to address the humanitarian impact

¹ ND-GAIN Index (Vulnerability measures a country's exposure, sensitivity and ability to adapt to the negative impact of climate change): [Vulnerability rankings | ND-GAIN Index](#)

of climate change in conflict contexts and to ensure that climate action also benefits people living in conflict areas. The ICRC supports conflict-affected communities in adapting to climate change. The ICRC has facilitated exchange among state experts on how to overcome challenges in protecting the environment in armed conflicts.

Denmark remains committed to actively monitor the ongoing discussions and future advancements in tackling climate changes in the years ahead. Denmark will support ICRC's ongoing engagement with climate actors as United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) and the governing bodies of the Conference of Parties (COP). As a supporter to the Climate and Environment Charter for Humanitarian Organizations, Denmark will follow the ICRC's work in this area and will support the ICRC's effort to integrate climate risks into its operations and in reducing its carbon footprint.

Priority area 5: Enhance organisational efficiency and effectiveness of the ICRC

For the ICRC to deliver on its mandate, including the priority areas highlighted above, it needs to be an efficient and effective organization. ICRC's ambition is to achieve improvements on e.g. communication, financial stability, accelerate the digital transformation, and to have focus on security management and duty of care as well as evaluation, learning and innovation.

In its Institutional Strategy, the ICRC points to acceleration of the digital transformation as an enabler for the organisation's readiness and efficiency. The improvement of its digital organization, processes and systems will enable the ICRC in supplementing its global physical presence with digital means and thereby optimise the utilisation of digital assets and human capital as well as safeguarding the data entrusted to the organization.

The ICRC has engaged in collaboration with international finance institutions (IFIs). The partnership with the World Bank covers policy engagement, knowledge exchange and operational collaboration. The partnership is increasingly informing the World Bank's positioning on how to remain engaged in contexts of fragility, conflict and violence (FCV), and also presents an opportunity to expand ICRC's anticipatory action through stronger analytic capacity and supporting prevention and IHL efforts. Currently, the ICRC collaborates operational with the World Bank in Yemen, South Sudan and Myanmar. Other partnerships include the African Development Bank and the Islamic Development Bank.

The staff of the ICRC is often responding to complex situations, dealing with extensive human suffering and often facing intense professional stress. This is acknowledged in the new Institutional Strategy where staff wellbeing and cohesion is seen as an enabler to bolster the institutional readiness. Top priority is given to field delegations and leadership fostering a caring internal environment.

Denmark has a strong interest in strengthening the ICRC's capacity to deliver on its mandate, and will support the ICRC in implementing its new strategy. Denmark expects the ICRC to be leading on innovative solutions as well as data security in the humanitarian field, and expects the ICRC to report on efficiency gains in that regard. The ICRC applies a zero-tolerance policy towards any cases of fraud, corruption and other misconduct including sexual exploitation, abuse and harassment. Denmark expects the ICRC to follow and implement this strictly as well as to oversee it through its three-line oversight model defined by the Institute of Internal Auditors.

Denmark will continue to participate in the annual oversight and governance meetings for the DSG-members and closely follow the planning and budgeting of the ICRC. Denmark also expects the ICRC to fulfill their duty of care to their staff.

Cross cutting priorities: Gender and diversity

ICRC’s Institutional Strategy recognizes that gender and all diversity factors shape humanitarian needs and people’s access to its services. The ICRC has an institutional framework for Accountability to Affected People (AAP) which includes guiding principles on taking diversity factors into account including gender, age and disability. The ICRC aims to apply a gender and diversity lens to its operations through the AAP guiding principles. The ICRC annual planning process includes instructions for their delegations to conduct social context analyses, with a particular focus on gender, age, and disability factors and how these affect lived experiences and needs. These are used to inform the planning and design of ICRC’s interventions.

Denmark will continue to support and promote ICRC’s engagement this area. In line with Denmark’s strategies and priorities, the ICRC enhances its internal capacity to analyse, innovate and respond to diversity-related concerns by incorporating a gender perspective and promoting inclusive humanitarian action. This is

V. Budget

Denmark plans to continue to support the ICRC with multi-year core funding to enable the organisation to deliver on Danish priorities, as well as to give it flexibility to act where needed in accordance with its mandate. Denmark plans to support ICRC’s field budget of CHF 1.9 billion (app. DKK 14.31 billion) with DKK 85 million per year.

Indicative budget for Denmark’s core contributions to ICRC 2025-2028*)

Funding as per the Danish Finance Act for 2024 (DKK million)	Finance act code	Planned 2025	Planned 2026	Planned 2027	Planned 2028
Core funding	06.39.01.14	85	85	85	85
Total					

*) Subject to annual parliamentary approval

In addition to the annual core contribution to ICRC, which is the focus of this strategy, Denmark provides funding to the ICRC through two additional channels. One is through a set annual contribution channeled through the Danish Red Cross to the ICRC country appeals (DKK 40 million). The other is by contributing to extraordinary humanitarian country appeals, which is also channelled through the Danish Red Cross (DKK 138 million in 2023). While the organisational responsibility and the un-earmarked contribution lies with the UN Mission in Geneva, and the responsibility for the earmarked contribution lies with the Department of Humanitarian Action, Civil Society and Engagement, the two departments cooperate closely on both implementation and monitoring.

All funding is subject to annual parliamentary approval.

VI. Risks and assumptions

The ICRC works in complex and conflict-related areas which can pose reputational risks to the ICRC’s neutrality and independence. The ICRC will always in all contexts need to uphold

humanitarian neutrality to have access to people in need and adhere its role through the fundamental principles of humanity, impartiality, neutrality and independence. Recent examples have shown that disinformation, hate speech and public opinion multiplied by social media poses an increased risk to the humanitarian neutrality of the ICRC and to the staff in the field that will need to be addressed, including through the communication strategy.

The growing gap between humanitarian needs and the humanitarian financing available poses a risk to the ICRC and its ability to deliver on its mandate. There is a concern that the growing financial gap between well-funded large operations and underfunded contexts continues to expand, threatening ICRC's ability to remain needs-driven and hampering its operational capacity. The ICRC has given high attention to this issue including appointing a Chief Financial Officer at director level in 2024. The ICRC is itself acutely aware of the need to broaden the donorbase, and is reaching out to potential new donors including IFIs. It is also in contact with development agencies and climate actors to ensure that financing is used most effectively; and that funding and action is coordinated and applied in the most effective way to the benefit of those affected by multi-faceted crises.

VII. Danish approach to engagement with the organization

Based on the priority areas specified above, Denmark will continue to pursue an open and constructive dialogue with the ICRC across the organization to influence and follow up on the organization's work towards realizing these priorities. The Danish multilateral contact group for the ICRC was involved in the making of this strategy and will continue to serve as a platform for facilitating information sharing, identification of issues and coordination of joint messaging to the ICRC. After approval of this strategy it will be circulated to relevant Danish embassies.

The ICRC reports on their activities in their public annual report, and Denmark does not demand separate reporting for the core contribution. The UN mission in Geneva and the Department of Humanitarian Action, Civil Society and Engagement will continue to organise annual consultations between Denmark and the ICRC where the Danish priorities are discussed.

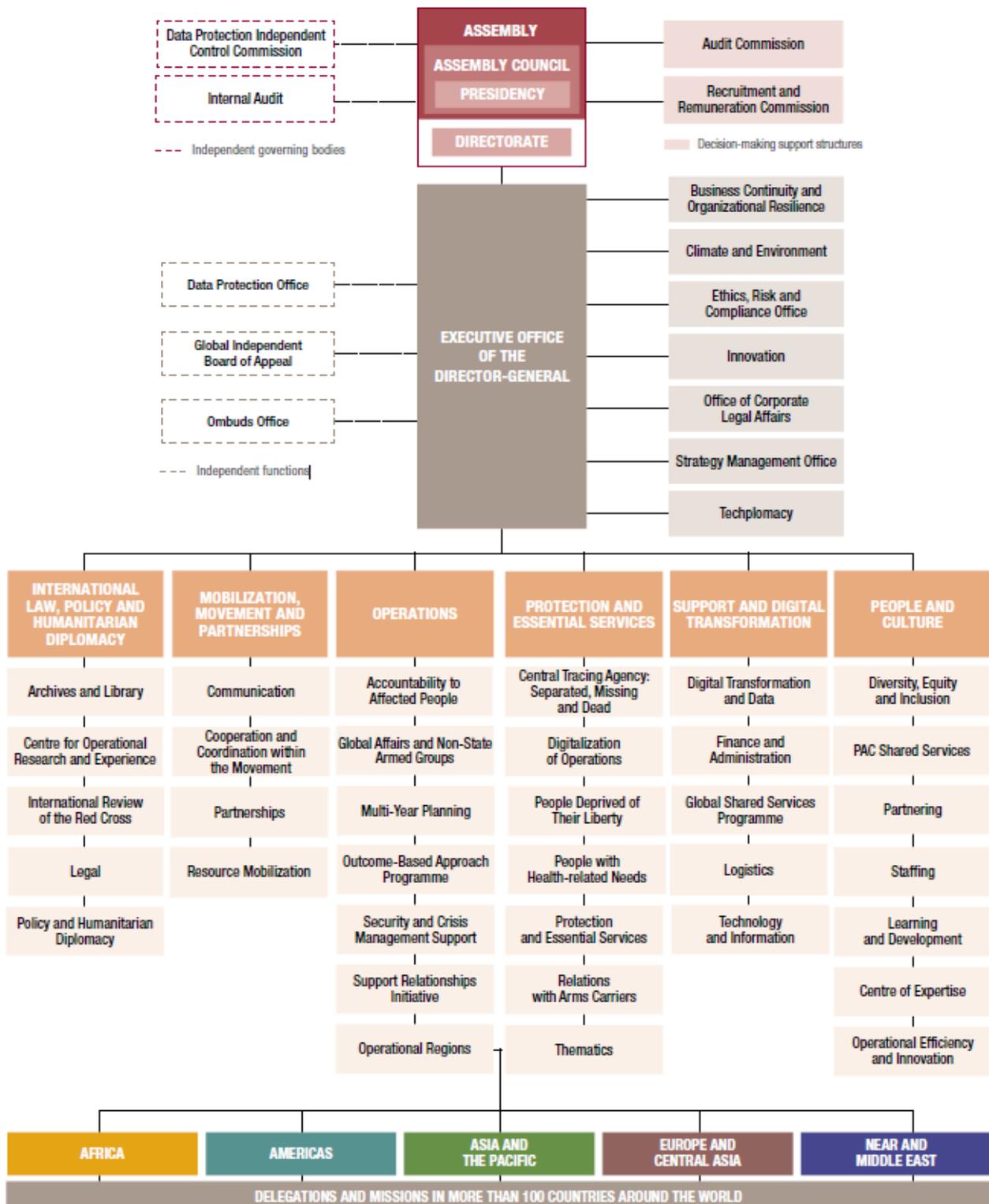
Denmark will also continue its active participation in the ICRC Donor Support Group (DSG). A wide range of issues are examined and discussed in this group, including thematic and policy issues, operational realities, staff well-being and management, reporting on progress on the implementation of the strategy, and topics related to finance and reporting. A new cycle with a new co-chair starts every year in June. As part of this group, Denmark will take part in the two annual policy fora (February and October), briefings, the annual meeting with the ICRC directors (June) as well as the annual oversight and governance meeting (May), see annex 3.

During Denmark's membership of the Security Council and during the presidency of the EU, closer dialogue is envisioned. The ICRC has a team in New York which can be engaged by elected members of the Security Council.

Although not mandatory, it could be considered to carry out a Danish mid-term review to assess the continued relevance of the Danish organisation strategy, the overall progress on key indicators, and of the cooperation between Denmark and the ICRC.

ANNEX 1: ICRC Organisation Chart

ICRC ORGANIZATIONAL CHART



As at 31.12.2023

ANNEX 2: Danish priorities and monitoring framework

Annex 2 provides an overview of priority areas for this Organisation Strategy and related ICRC Strategic Orientations, key initiatives and Strategy-level Key Performance Indicators.

Danish Priority Area 1: Protection and delivery of essential services to people affected by conflict		
ICRC Strategic Orientation	ICRC Key Initiatives	Strategy-level KPIs
Upholding the centrality of protection and the role of a neutral intermediary (SO1)	Strengthen protection dialogue and activities (1) Review and shape the future approach to the ICRC's neutral intermediary role (3)	The extent to which people affected by armed conflict and other situations of violence access relevant and impactful protection and assistance (KPI1)
Enhancing the response impact in acute and protracted phases of conflicts, as well as other situations of violence (SO3)	Deliver updated modalities for fast, effective emergency response to operational crises (8)	The extent to which the ICRC can access people in places affected by armed conflict or other situations of violence (KPI3)

Danish Priority area 2: Promotion and compliance with IHL		
ICRC Strategic Orientation	ICRC Key Initiatives	Strategy-level KPIs
Promoting IHL as a global political priority (SO2)	Establish IHL as a common good for humanity and re-assert its continued relevance (4) Strengthen the capacity and commitment of States and non-state armed groups and other relevant actors to uphold their legal obligations and promote good practices (5)	The level of recognition of the ICRC's position on key subject matters, such as the protection of civilians and individuals hors de combat, and the rights of detainees, missing persons and other affected people (KPI2) The extent to which the ICRC can access people in places affected by armed conflict or other situations of violence (KPI3)

Danish Priority area 3: Synergies between humanitarian and development efforts/Sustainable Humanitarian Impact		
ICRC Strategic Orientation	ICRC Key Initiatives	Strategy-level KPIs
Enhancing the response impact in acute and protracted phases of conflicts, as well as other situations of violence (SO3)	Deliver updated modalities for fast, effective emergency response to operational crises (8) Enhance ICRC preparedness for operational response to large-scale conflicts, including in partnership with the Movement (9) Roll-out of revised palette of services (10)	The extent to which the ICRC can access people in places affected by armed conflict or other situations of violence (KPI3) The effectiveness of the ICRC's coordination with Movement partners (KPI4)

Priority area 4: Climate and conflict		
ICRC Strategic Orientation	ICRC Key Initiatives	Strategy-level KPIs
Enhancing the response impact in acute and protracted phases of conflicts, as well as other situations of violence (SO3)	Strengthening preparedness and emergency response capacity, rolling out revised palette of services (8,9,10)	The extent to which people affected by armed conflict and other situations of violence access relevant and impactful protection and assistance (KPI1)

Priority area 5: Enhance organizational efficiency and effectiveness of the ICRC		
ICRC Strategic Orientation	ICRC Key Initiatives	Strategy-level KPIs
Optimizing risk management and financial stability (SO6)	<p>Enhance steering, oversight of risk, compliance and financial management to support operational agility and management decision-making (16)</p> <p>Empower managers and staff to act and take risk-informed and financially responsible decisions (17)</p> <p>Strengthen financial resilience through an optimized financial architecture and resource mobilization approaches (18)</p>	The level of financial stability with the organization (KPI6)
Accelerating the digital transformation (SO7)	<p>Deploy front-end digital capabilities, digital initiatives in support of a new ICRC organizational model (19)</p> <p>Cyber security transformation and data protection (21)</p>	<p>The extent to which people affected by armed conflict and other situations of violence access relevant and impactful protection and assistance (KPI1)</p> <p>The extent to which the ICRC can access people in places affected by armed conflict or other situations of violence (KPI3)</p>
Enhancing skills, trust, cohesion and responsibility (SO8)	<p>Recruitment, integration and learning journey is re-designed in line with new strategy and ICRC's needs for generalist / management training are met (26)</p> <p>Actions to enhancing diversity and inclusion inside the ICRC (27)</p>	The level of motivation, internal cohesion and trust among staff (KPI5)

ANNEX 3: Annual wheel

	ICRC	GVAMIS
Quarter 1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • DSG policy forum (February) • DSG field trip (March) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Participation in policy forum (February) • To the extent possible participation in field trip, alternating with HUMCIV (March) • Annual consultation (March)
Quarter 2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Governance and Oversight meeting (May) • ICRC annual report (June) • DSG annual meeting (June) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Participation in Governance and Oversight meeting (May) • Participation in annual meeting (June)
Quarter 3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • DSG policy forum (September/October) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Preparation of Annual Stock Taking Report for the preceding year based on the latest ICRC information (July/August) • Preparation of a draft Annual Action plan (July/August) • Participation in policy forum
Quarter 4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Annual meeting with Heads of Delegations • DSG field trip (November) • Launch of annual appeal (November/December) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To the extent possible participation in field trip, Alternating with HUMCIV (November) • Participation in the annual appeal (November/December)

During Denmark’s membership of the United Nations Security Council 2025-2026 there will be ad hoc contact between Denmark and the ICRC office in New York. This will typically be initiated by MFA Copenhagen or the Permanent Mission of Denmark in New York.