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Singapore Government

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**SPEECH BY THE ACTING PRESIDENT, DR YEOH GHIM SENG,
AT THE OPENING CEREMONY OF THE SIXTH CONFERENCE OF LEADERS
OF RED CROSS AND RED CRESCENT SOCIETIES WITHIN ASEAN
AT THE MANDARIN HOTEL ON MONDAY, 24 JUNE 1985 AT 9.00 AM**

In 1859, Henri Dunant founded the Red Cross movement, an international organisation to provide humanitarian service for the relief of human suffering. His vision burns bright today. The Red Cross, having stood the test of 125 years, is as relevant now as it was when it was conceived.

We live in a world blessed on the one hand with the benefits of modern civilisation, scientific and technological progress, but plagued on the other by mass disasters both natural and man-made. The efforts of the international community to promote peace and co-operation among nations appear ineffective in halting the arms race or reducing armed conflicts with all their capacity to destroy and cause suffering. Conflict situations are a daily reality for many thousands of people. In such an unsatisfactory and contentious world, it is to the Red Cross and Red Crescent Organisations that Governments and people invariably turn for immediate relief and assistance without discrimination.

A record of excellent service spanning more than a century has earned the movement the respect of peoples and governments. It has brought about rapprochement between conflicting parties, helping to pave the way towards peace. It has remained true to its original mission - to provide assistance and protection to mankind in distress and to alleviate human suffering. It knows no national boundaries. Within Asia, the Red Cross is active in work with refugees, and in helping to combat the effects of endemic poverty and poor health and recurring natural calamities.

Ten years ago, the Singapore Red Cross took the bold step of bringing together Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies of Asean and hosted the very first Conference.

Five meetings have been held. They demonstrate the importance of your coming together to exchange information, share insights into common problems and to seek practical solutions.

Fortunately, Singapore has been spared some of the problems faced by countries in the region. This has not prevented the Singapore Red Cross from participating in relief work and putting its resources and services at the disposal of countries in greater need.

The Asean Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies have actively supported the efforts of their respective Governments by providing humanitarian aid and service in disaster relief, primary health care, and refugee assistance. This Conference provides an opportunity for you to discuss how your societies can contribute more effectively to this objective. One challenge faced by all service organisations is that of motivating greater numbers of volunteers to render their service to the cause of mankind. All these, and the need to coordinate the efforts and combine the strengths of the altruistic in our different countries towards a common good will provide impetus to your deliberations over the next three days.

I have great pleasure in declaring open the Sixth Conference of Red Cross and Red Crescent Leaders of Societies within Asean and wishing you success in your deliberations.

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