Mr Chairman,

On behalf of the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC) allow me to congratulate you and the members of the Bureau on your election to guide the work of the Third Committee during this session.

We welcome the increased recognition of the importance of addressing the specific needs of women, girls, boys and men in emergencies, while also giving appropriate consideration to age and disability. In the past three weeks, several events at the UN have served to highlight interlinkages between disability and disasters, which was also the focus of this year’s International Day for Disaster Reduction. Furthermore, the launch of a new Declaration on Sexual Violence in Conflict two weeks ago is an important step forward.

**Violence in natural disasters**

In many emergencies, the risk of community tension and inter-personal violence is a major concern. Allow me to focus on an aspect of violence that is critical, but not often given the attention it deserves. While we have paid needed attention to interpersonal violence in conflict situations, and must continue to do so, we can do more to focus on the violence that occurs in situations of natural disasters. Every year, natural disasters disrupt millions of lives, yet among the hidden impacts of such disasters is the devastation caused by the gender-based violence that often follows. This violence occurs in camps, in shelters, in homes, and on the streets, and has a devastating physical and mental impact on its victims as well as social and economic repercussions for the individuals, families and the entire affected community.

The IFRC, in partnership with the Canadian Red Cross, has been scaling up its own activities on this issue. In the past three years in particular, we have worked to improve policies, tools and programs, and to build knowledge and capacities among Red Cross and Red Crescent National Societies. One of the latest tools being developed by the IFRC and the Canadian Red Cross is a mobile violence prevention application (app) for disaster responders. The app, which will assist responders in integrating violence prevention across sectors, in responding to violence, as well as allow for live mapping functions to identify areas of risk and safety, is being piloted this year and will be finalized in 2014. We call on all stakeholders engaged in emergency preparedness, response and recovery to prioritize violence prevention, mitigation and response and to strengthen community-based support.
The IFRC commends the leadership shown by Japan on gender equality and the empowerment of women in natural disasters and welcomes the resolution adopted at CSW 56 on this issue. Moreover, IFRC welcomes the adoption of the agreed conclusions at CSW 57 on the elimination of violence against women and girls. We particularly welcome the inclusion of language to ensure that the specific needs of women and girls are incorporated into disaster risk reduction and humanitarian assistance programmes. We further welcome the acknowledgement that women and girls should fully participate in these efforts, and the need to ensure that in disaster preparedness efforts and in post-disaster settings, the prevention of and response to all forms of violence against women and girls are addressed.

The inclusion of the issues of violence prevention and response in the agreed conclusions is a positive step in the normative framework on this issue. Moving forward, we need to ensure appropriate attention is given to taking strategic and practical action to mitigate the risk of violence in natural disaster settings in both policy discussion and programme activities, including by strengthening the collection and use of sex-, age-, and disability-disaggregated data and by enhancing capacities to measure the effectiveness of interventions designed to reduce violence. We call for the integration of violence prevention analysis at the outset of humanitarian response.

**Post-2015 development agenda**

Allow me to turn attention towards the post-2015 development agenda. As we approach the 2015 deadline for the MDGs, we need to accelerate achievement and pay particular focus to the most off-track goals. This is especially true of MDG 5 on maternal health, which lags the furthest behind. Many of the world’s most vulnerable women die needlessly because of unequal access to information, prevention, treatment and services to meet their basic health needs. We must ramp up our work, resources and actions to address MDG 5 and the other areas that are lagging behind.

The post-2015 agenda must learn the lessons of the MDGs and ensure that addressing inequalities is at the heart of the new framework. Gender inequality and discrimination and violence against women have significantly hampered MDG achievement. Unless this is explicitly addressed in the new framework, progress towards sustainable development will remain elusive. The IFRC thus joins the call for a stand-alone goal on gender-equality, as well as for the integration of gender-sensitive targets and indicators across all goals.

We look forward to the upcoming discussions on gender equality and the empowerment of women in the Open Working Group (February 2014 session) as well as in the forthcoming CSW session on the priority theme of the “Challenges and achievements in the implementation of the Millennium Development Goals for women and girls”.

In closing, we believe that changing mindsets, attitudes and behaviour from discrimination and violence against women to respect for diversity, equality and active social and political inclusion is a critical issue to integrate into development discussions. In this regard, the IFRC advocates for the role of values and skills based education, including its institutionalization at the national level. Red Cross and Red Crescent National Societies have also pledged to increase their engagement in this area.