Mr. President,

As this is the first time my delegation has taken the floor in this committee, allow me to congratulate you and bureau on your election. The IFRC wishes you the best in your efforts to guide the work of the 2nd committee.

Mr. President,

Poverty eradication is the single greatest challenge facing the world today. Over 1.2 Billion people, or 20.6% of the world’s population, continue to live on less than a $1.25 a day. Nonetheless, and despite a difficult economic climate, there has been significant progress on reducing global income poverty over the past decade. However, progress has been uneven, with many regions, nations, and vulnerable groups lagging behind. The picture is even more complicated when we go beyond income poverty. According to the Oxford University Multidimensional Poverty Initiative, which considers income and assets along with data on health, nutrition, and access to basic services, 30% of the world’s population lives in extreme multidimensional poverty. In designing and targeting our poverty eradication efforts, it is critical that we address the entire spectrum of challenges that the poor and vulnerable face. The IFRC thus joins the call to go beyond income poverty in a standalone poverty eradication goal for the post-2015 agenda.

Mr. President,

In underscoring that poverty is a multi-dimensional phenomenon, the Secretary General’s Report highlights a number of manifestations of poverty in the world today, including: pervasive hunger and malnutrition, limited access to basic services, social exclusion and inequality, and vulnerability to economic shocks, climate change, and disasters. In order to address these issues, the IFRC believes it is critical for national and international efforts to focus on building the resilience of the most vulnerable. Building community resilience makes development gains sustainable, ensuring that people do not fall back into poverty when the next shock comes. Allow me to highlight two important points in this regard:

Access to basic services is critical for resilience building and poverty eradication: Vulnerable groups often remain poor because they lack access to basic services, including health, education, and water.
and sanitation. A significant portion of household income among the poor goes to treat easily preventable health conditions. It is critical that the poor have access to safe water and sanitation, as well as high quality affordable health care. The IFRC thus joins the call for the post-2015 agenda to ensure universal access to safe water and sanitation and for Universal Health Care (UHC) to be at the heart of the new agenda.

Resilience to disasters must be addressed: Disasters, both large and small, have a negative effect on poverty eradication efforts and disproportionately affect the most vulnerable people and countries. Large scale disasters in LDCs have erased a decade of development gains and will significantly hamper poverty eradication efforts for years to come. The world’s poorest populations, particularly in rural areas, suffer from seasonal floods, droughts, and storms, which threaten their livelihoods and erode their resilience. As the SG’s report highlights, climate change is already aggravating these chronic environmental threats, which are only worsening with time. As a result, reducing disaster risk must become a mainstream development activity. Further, countries must prioritize and adequately fund addressing disaster risk at the community level, where disaster impacts are most felt. Finally, the OWG on the SDGs should build on the link between disasters and poverty eradication already made in the HLP report to ensure that reducing disaster risk is an integral part of the post-2015 agenda.

Mr. President,

The disproportionate effect of shocks and stresses on the most vulnerable is not limited to developing countries. Last week, the IFRC released a report, entitled “Think Differently: the Humanitarian Impacts of the Economic Crisis in Europe,” warning that the effects of the current crisis will be felt for decades to come. The report, which surveyed the experience of National Societies in 22 European Countries, found that the economic crisis and the associated cuts in public spending have increased inequality, made the poor poorer, and increased the ranks of the “new poor” - families formerly able to meet their basic needs who now must choose between feeding their children and keeping a roof over their head.

Red Cross National Societies have had to take unprecedented steps and significantly scale up their domestic operations to respond to increasing needs in Europe. In 2012, the Spanish Red Cross launched its first ever national appeal to assist communities in Spain. Just this week, the British Red Cross launched a food aid campaign in the UK, marking the first time it’s been involved in domestic food collection and distribution since the end of the Second World War. In total, Red Cross National Societies in Europe have seen the number of people dependent on their domestic food assistance increase by 75% since the start of the crisis. In order to limit the effects of the economic crisis on the poorest and most vulnerable, drastic and indiscriminate cuts to social service budgets must stop. This is particularly true of spending on public health. In these times of crises, we need to ensure that everyone is provided with sufficient, not reduced, health services. The long-term cost of increased poverty and weakened health is too great, even in financial terms.

Mr. President,

Over the coming two years, governments will negotiate a framework that will guide development cooperation beyond 2015. In this process, governments have an historic opportunity to commit to ending poverty and hunger within a generation. The IFRC joins the call for a “getting to zero” approach on poverty and hunger in the post-2015 agenda. As an organization dedicated to serving the most vulnerable, the IFRC will continue to address the needs of the poor, wherever they may be found. And with their auxiliary status, Red Cross Red Crescent National Societies stand ready to work with governments to achieve that noble objective. I thank you for the opportunity to contribute to this important discussion.