**SPEECH BY THE SLOVENIAN RED CROSS PRESIDENT, MRS NATAŠA PIRC MUSAR, PhD,
32nd INTERNATIONAL RED CROSS AND RED CRESCENT NATIONAL SOCIETIES – GENERAL DEBATE, 8th December 2015**

Dear Royal Highnesses, Excellences, National Societies colleagues,
dear Red Cross friends,

I am representing a small EU Red Cross National Society of Slovenia, which consists of 56 local branches with the volunteer network of thousands of volunteers across the country.

According to our universal mandate Slovenian Red Cross is providing so called typical RC services and has an auxiliary role to the public authorities in the field of First Aid, Disaster Management, Blood Donation and Tracing Services. Slovenia, with a population of 2 million, was heavily affected by 2008 economic crisis resulting in 290.000 people living below the poverty line. Consequently, SLO Red reinforced Social Welfare programs serving the most vulnerable in the community.

This year in the fall, namely in mid-September, SLO Red Cross was faced with an additional challenge.
People on the move.

Together with the state authorities we have been following the developments in the Europe in regard to migration beforehand and were preparing joint national response plans. Still, honestly speaking, October large influx of migrants stunned us. Till today **nearly 300.000 migrants entered** Slovenia with an average between 6.000 to 9.000 people per day, reaching peak on 21th October when more than 13.800 people entered in a single day.

Practically everybody that entered Slovenia, wants to continue their travel towards Northern Europe, this fact is also reflected in only 105 asylum applications submitted in Slovenia. In all reception and accommodation centres across the country (16), Slovenian Red Cross is:

* ensuring humanitarian assistance in food and non-food items
* providing First Aid through our 91 First Aid teams and
* carrying out Restoring Family Links activities.

There are more than 200 RC volunteers in the centres a day, supported by SRC staff providing above mentioned services, in Dobova – main entry point to Slovenia, RC services are provided 24/7.

Maybe for some of you, numbers of migrant’s influx might not be high (approximately 6000 a day), however for a country of two-million it is like 2 million people would enter USA or half a million people would cross borders into Germany in one day.

Consequently authorities and moreover Slovenian Red Cross are faced with many challenges such as ensuring sufficient human and financial resources and last but not least finding a fine balance among services to the most vulnerable in Slovenia and the migrants.

I want to remind you that small countries and National Society like mine need a collective response and support from stronger National Societies, Federation and ICRC - from all of you, who possess more know how in migration, disaster management and some other fields of our work.

On top of all these tasks and preparing for winter conditions, we have to deal with the rather unwelcome public opinion, with a lot of hate speech present.

Dear colleagues,

Merely humans have the ability to do good and unfortunately only humans spread terror and horror and thus do an enormous harm to the whole global society. People AND NOT religion.

We the Red Cross family, condemn all the wars and violence and at all times remain dedicated to the humanity and alleviating human suffering in all circumstances.

Let’s be the role model for all the rest in reaching out to others and seeing fellow human beings beyond appearances, such as wearing headscarf or beard, thus promoting humanity and tolerance at all times. Only in this way our society will overcome all the challenges of current time…If contrary will prevail, not only that we will be faced with more human victims and suffering, but we will terminate basic civilization norms and kill the humanity.

Such message, rooted in our Fundamental Principles and underpinned humanitarian values, I want to spread as a virus across my country.

Thank for your attention!