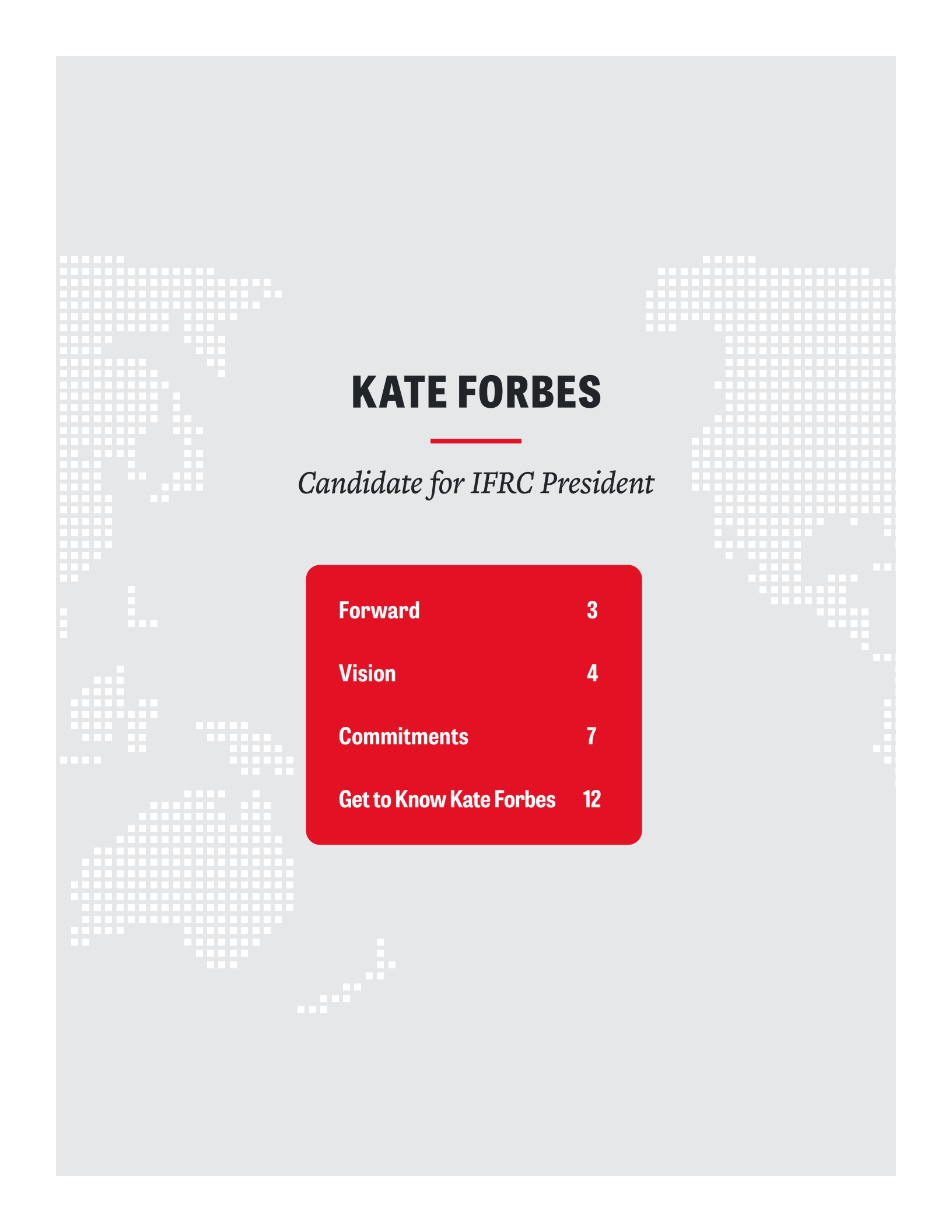




KATE FORBES

Leading the IFRC Network to Meet the Challenges of Today and Tomorrow

FORWARD TOGETHER *Impactful, Resilient, and Inclusive*



KATE FORBES

Candidate for IFRC President

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**American
Red Cross**

FORWARD

I remain inspired and deeply grateful for the trust you placed in me to serve as President of the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC).

We are navigating one of the most challenging humanitarian landscapes in recent history. It is testing our principles, stretching our capacities, and confronting us with difficult choices. Yet even in this complex environment, we continue to be there — working with communities and partners to deliver on our life-saving mission. Across our IFRC network and within the Secretariat, key reforms are now reaching a critical stage. This is a moment that calls for continuity, shared ownership, and leadership that is steady and principled, with the determination to see this work through.

Since assuming this role, I have reflected deeply on the responsibilities entrusted to me and on the work we have set in motion together through ongoing dialogue with National Societies, colleagues, and partners. I am convinced that this work is essential to the strength and future of our network, and that it requires continued focus and follow-through to deliver its full impact.

With this conviction and sense of responsibility, I have decided to present myself as a candidate for a second term as IFRC President, in order to carry this work forward, fulfil the mandate entrusted to me, and bring these efforts to fruition. I remain fully committed to leading the IFRC network with integrity, humility, and transparency to meet the challenges of today and tomorrow.

This decision is not about continuity alone. It is about consolidating and accelerating our collective efforts. We need to ensure that the reforms we have initiated together translate into measurable and lasting impact for our IFRC network and the communities we serve. We must also ensure that the **IFRC emerges stronger, more united, and better prepared for the future.**

This is the spirit of **Forward Together: Impactful, Resilient, and Inclusive.** It reflects our shared ambition to strengthen our unity, deepen our accountability, and ensure that our Federation remains anchored in our Fundamental Principles while adapting to a rapidly changing world. This document sets out my vision and commitments to you, grounded in a simple but powerful belief: that our strength lies in our unity; our relevance is rooted in our proximity to communities; and our future depends on our ability to adapt together to a rapidly changing world.

I offer it in a spirit of openness and responsibility, and I ask for your continued trust and support as we take this important work forward, together.

“I remain fully committed to leading the IFRC network with integrity, humility, and transparency to meet the challenges of today and tomorrow.”

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VISION

Our World Today and the Challenges We Face

The humanitarian landscape we are operating in today is not simply more complex — it has fundamentally shifted. Since late 2025, we have entered a period where many of the assumptions that guided humanitarian action for decades can no longer be taken for granted. What once felt stable and predictable is no longer reliable.

Needs are rising at an unprecedented scale while resources are tightening. Disasters are no longer isolated events but recurring realities, growing in frequency and intensity across all regions. Conflicts continue to be protracted, becoming more fragmented and exacting an

ever-heavier toll on civilians. Access — once difficult — is now, in many contexts, severely constrained. And most concerning, respect for international humanitarian law and for our Fundamental Principles is being challenged in ways that test not only our operations, but our identity.

In this evolving reality, the humanitarian system is being asked to do more in environments that are increasingly unpredictable and, at times, openly hostile. Beyond the operational strain, this moment demands that we make difficult choices. It requires us to act with clarity and to define the direction of our network for the years ahead. **We must reflect on how we prioritize and ensure our choices advance equity, efficiency, and effectiveness, while remaining anchored in our principles as the space to uphold them is narrowing.**

For the IFRC network, this is not only a moment of challenge — it is a moment of reckoning and of choice. It calls on us to be clear on who we are, and to ask what kind of humanitarian network we must become to meet the realities of today and tomorrow.

It is from this reflection that my vision emerges — grounded in our values, shaped by the realities we face, and driven by a clear sense of responsibility for the future. **This is a moment that requires clarity of purpose, unity of action, and the courage to evolve.**

COMMITMENTS

1. Governance Reform
2. Stronger National Societies
3. Protecting our People
4. Reinforcing Unity
5. Future-Ready Leadership



Our strengths and seizing the opportunity to better serve

Our strength has always been our global network — 191 National Societies rooted in their communities and supported by more than 17 million volunteers. In a world where access is shrinking, trust is fragile, and sustained presence is rare — this local foundation is not just an advantage. It is what defines us.

The IFRC is built on proximity, trust, and permanence. That is what makes us relevant today and what must guide us in how we move forward.

The IFRC has always adapted to the changing nature of crises throughout its long history. And we must adapt again — not by stepping away from our principles but standing even more firmly by them. Our commitment does not change: **to act with humanity, and to stand together as one network with those who need us most.**

Today's crises demand more. More scale. More speed. More coherence. We must shift from **supporting activities** to **strengthening institutions.**

National Societies must not only respond; they must endure and thrive. That means stronger financial foundations, better governance, and sustained leadership development. It means investing in people, ensuring that staff and volunteers are protected, supported, and retained. Resilience is not abstract. It is the ability to act in crisis and between crises, to adapt, to lead, and to remain trusted. **Strengthening National Societies is not one priority among many. It is the strategic investment on which our future depends.**

This transformation requires full engagement and clarity of purpose of our governance bodies. The IFRC Governing Board, Vice-Presidents, Commissions, and Committees each play a critical role in guiding this process. They help set direction and provide the space for diverse voices across our network to shape our collective path forward. In a time of increasing complexity, strong and cohesive governance is essential to ensure that our ambitions translate into action, and that our unity is preserved while we adapt.

At the same time, the role of the IFRC Secretariat must continue to evolve to better serve and strengthen the network. Its value cannot be measured solely in terms of processes or coordination mechanisms, but in its ability to enable the network to function as a coherent system, resulting in greater impact.

Three roles are not only critical — they must continue to be strengthened and upheld if our network is to remain impactful, resilient, and inclusive.

- First, the Secretariat must continue to serve as a **system integrator**, ensuring that the diversity of National Societies translates into collective strength. This requires alignment of standards, coherence of action, and the ability to mobilize the network around shared priorities.
- Second, it must continue to serve as a **risk manager**. As humanitarian action comes under increasing scrutiny, the need for strong protection of volunteers and staff, fiduciary oversight, compliance, and reputation management becomes more acute. The credibility of the entire network depends on maintaining trust.
- Third, it must continue to serve as a **global negotiator and advocate**, engaging with governments, donors, and international institutions, positioning the IFRC as a key principled actor in a changing humanitarian system.

Without the strengthening of these roles, the IFRC network risks fragmentation, reduced impact, and a weakened collective voice.

This is a defining moment for the IFRC. The challenge is clear: we must adapt faster, decide with courage, and focus on what matters most.

But the opportunity is just as powerful. Because in a world under strain, **the IFRC's strengths — its local presence, its volunteer base, its global network, and its principled approach — are more relevant than ever.**

“...the IFRC's strengths — its local presence, its volunteer base, its global network, and its principled approach — are more relevant than ever.”

If we seize this moment, we can renew and strengthen our network. I see an IFRC that is united, trusted, and ready — anchored in its Fundamental Principles, yet agile in the face of change. An IFRC that puts the safety and well-being of its people at the centre. An IFRC that invests in future-ready leadership, embracing

innovation and preparing the next generation to lead with integrity and vision. An IFRC that strengthens unity across the Movement, working in complementarity and solidarity with the International Committee of the Red Cross in a fragmented world.

Above all, I envision an IFRC that remains unwavering in its purpose: to stand with communities in times of crisis and in times of calm, to uphold humanity in the face of adversity, and to ensure that, even in the most complex and challenging environments, no one is left behind.



“Over the past years, we have worked together to strengthen governance, reinforce transparency and accountability, protect our Fundamental Principles, and move decision-making and resources closer to communities. But our work has not finished. We need to build on the momentum to ensure our processes and structures fully reflect the diversity, strengths, and voices of all members.”

KATE FORBES

COMMITMENTS

Governance Reform

The need for governance reform within the IFRC is not new, but the urgency has increased significantly in today's environment. As pressures on the humanitarian system increase, so too do expectations on how institutions are governed: **how decisions are made, who participates in them, and whether those decisions reflect both the diversity and the unity of the network.**

For the IFRC, the diversity of its membership is a defining strength. Yet it also requires a governance system that is both inclusive and functional, capable of balancing representation with effectiveness.

At the core of the governance reform that we started in 2025 lies a fundamental question: **Are our rules and processes equitable for the diversity of our membership?**

As the network evolves, we must ensure that all National Societies, regardless of size, capacity, or financial contribution, can meaningfully participate in shaping the direction of the organization. This includes their ability to contribute to deliberations, influence decisions, and access leadership roles.

At the same time, equality of voice does not automatically translate into equity of participation. Structural differences between National Societies, whether in resources, institutional maturity, or geopolitical context, can create imbalances in influence if not carefully addressed. Governance reform must

deliver genuine equity, ensuring that all members can engage meaningfully while preserving the collective integrity of the network.

Equity in membership rights must go hand in hand with accountability. **Being part of the IFRC is not only about representation — it is also about upholding shared standards, principles, and responsibilities.** National Societies are bound together not only by their rights within the IFRC, but by their commitment to the Fundamental Principles, to good governance, and to operational integrity. Strong governance is not only about structure; it is about trust, legitimacy, and collective ownership of our shared direction.

COMMITMENT

I will lead governance reform that inspires trust and will champion a governance framework that is inclusive, transparent and accountable at every level of our IFRC. Roles and responsibilities must be clearly defined. Decisions must be transparent and clear. Accountability must be consistent. I will ensure that our governance reflects the diversity of our network — where every National Society sees itself represented, and every voice has a place at the table.



Governing Board members signed the revised Code of Conduct for IFRC governance — a reaffirmation of our collective commitment to integrity, accountability, and principled leadership across the IFRC network. Governing Board session, Geneva, October 2025

Stronger National Societies

National Societies are the foundation of the IFRC, yet their capacities vary widely. Financial sustainability is one of the most pressing challenges facing National Societies. Many National Societies remain heavily dependent on external funding, which is increasingly uncertain and often short-term. This limits their ability to plan, invest, and grow sustainably.

Operational capacity is another key issue. Our National Societies operate in a wide range of contexts, with some working in more stable environments and others in highly fragile settings with limited infrastructure, staffing, and systems. This creates disparities across the network and can affect the overall effectiveness of our collective action.

At the same time, middle-sized National Societies often find themselves navigating a different kind of challenge. They are expected to deliver and contribute to international efforts. Yet, they do not always have the visibility, influence, or predictable resources of larger National Societies. Their potential is significant, but too often underutilized.

Volunteer engagement is evolving. Traditional models of volunteering are changing, particularly among younger generations, who may seek more flexible, skills-based, or short-term engagement. At the same time, volunteers are increasingly exposed to greater risks and expectations, without always having the necessary support structures and protection in place.

In complex and high-risk contexts, these challenges are amplified. National Societies must navigate recurring disasters, conflicts, political sensitivities, and resource constraints, often simultaneously. Supporting them requires a balance between respecting their autonomy and providing effective support and oversight.

In the most vulnerable and complex contexts, where needs are greatest and resources are often most constrained, **we must ensure that National Societies are equipped not only to respond, but to endure and thrive. The strength of the IFRC lies in the strength of its National Societies.**

COMMITMENT

I will support every National Society, regardless of size or context, to strengthen its capacity, amplify its voice, and realise its full potential. This includes advancing financial sustainability, reinforcing operational capacity where it is most needed, and evolving volunteer engagement to reflect the realities of today's world.



"I remain inspired by the spirit, dedication, and innovation of our volunteers and staff across the globe. They embody the very best of our network, turning compassion into action every day."

KATE FORBES

Protecting Our People

The safety of volunteers and staff is one of the most pressing concerns in humanitarian action today. Humanitarian environments are increasingly dangerous, with rising incidents of violence, targeting, and harassment against those delivering aid.

One of the key challenges is the erosion of respect for the protective value of the Red Cross/Red Crescent/Red Crystal emblems. In some contexts, the emblem no longer guarantees safety in the way it once did, which fundamentally alters the risk environment for volunteers and staff.

Internally, we must address gaps in how risks are assessed, managed, and mitigated across the network. Not all National Societies have the same level of capacity to implement robust security systems or provide adequate support to their people.

In addition to physical risks, we must recognize and respond to the psychological toll on volunteers and staff working in prolonged and high-intensity crises. Mental health and well-being are often under-resourced, despite being critical to sustaining humanitarian action.

Finally, we must strengthen our global advocacy. Protection is not only an internal responsibility — it also requires consistent and coordinated engagement with states and other actors to uphold international humanitarian law and ensure accountability.

Without volunteers, the IFRC's model of community-based action cannot function. Protecting them is therefore not only a moral responsibility, but a condition for the sustainability of the network itself and our ability to serve people. **That is why protection must be embedded in every aspect of the IFRC's work — not as an afterthought, but as a foundational principle.**



“Protection of humanitarian personnel is not achieved in conference halls. It requires political will, respect for international humanitarian law, and concrete action at every level.”

KATE FORBES

Launch of the Declaration on the Protection of Humanitarian Personnel, United Nations General Assembly, New York, September 2025

COMMITMENT

The safety and well-being of our volunteers and staff will remain at the centre of everything we do. I will strengthen our global advocacy for their protection, grounded in international humanitarian law and our Fundamental Principles. And I will strengthen systems across our network to prevent, mitigate, and respond to risks — physical, psychological, and legal.

Reinforcing Unity

Unity within the Movement is one of its greatest strengths, but also one of its most complex challenges.

One of the persistent challenges is ensuring complementarity without duplication. In practice, overlapping roles and competition for resources can sometimes undermine collective effectiveness.

Trust and communication are critical factors. Differences in perspectives, priorities, and operational approaches can lead to misunderstandings or fragmentation if not actively managed.

The broader geopolitical environment adds another layer of complexity. As global polarization increases, maintaining a sense of unity and neutrality within a diverse global network becomes more difficult.

At the same time, expectations for collaboration are rising. There is a growing need to demonstrate collective impact, which requires stronger strategic alignment, shared planning, and mutual accountability across the Movement.

COMMITMENT

I will strengthen our unity as one Movement. Our effectiveness depends on our ability to act together. I will deepen cooperation across the Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement — building trust, reinforcing complementarity, and reducing fragmentation. Together, we will work as one Movement, respecting each other's mandates, aligned in purpose and coordinated in action, to maximize our collective impact.

Unity is not automatic; it is a leadership responsibility that must be continuously nurtured through dialogue, mutual respect, strategic alignment, and a shared commitment to those we serve. In a fragmented and polarized world, our ability to act as one Movement, while respecting our distinct roles, is more important than ever.



“The challenges we face may be global, but so is the power of our unity. When we act as one network and one Movement, we can reach further and achieve more.”

KATE FORBES

“In every visit, I make it a priority to engage with our Red Cross and Red Crescent Youth Leaders to listen to their challenges, their aspirations, and their ideas. These conversations help me understand how we can better support them to reach their full potential.”

KATE FORBES



Future-Ready Leadership

Preparing the IFRC for the future requires us to confront a range of interconnected challenges. One of the most significant is the pace of change — technological, geopolitical, and societal — which is accelerating faster than many institutions can adapt.

We must nurture leaders who are not only technically competent, but also capable of navigating uncertainty, complexity, and ethical dilemmas. However, leadership development across the network is uneven, and opportunities are not always accessible to all.

Generational change presents both an opportunity and a challenge. Younger leaders bring new perspectives, expectations, and ways of working, and we must strive to bridge generational differences and ensure continuity of institutional knowledge.

Technology, including artificial intelligence and digital tools, is transforming humanitarian action. Yet the IFRC must ensure that it adopts these tools responsibly and ethically, particularly in relation to data protection and trust with communities.

COMMITMENT

I will invest in the next generation of leaders and ensure that our IFRC is prepared to lead in a rapidly changing world. This means embracing innovation responsibly, responding to geopolitical shifts with clarity, and adapting to evolving societal expectations. Across our network, we must develop leaders who combine competence with courage, and technical expertise with strong ethical judgment.

Finally, we must change our mindset. Becoming future-ready is not only about skills and systems; it also requires a cultural shift toward openness, learning, and adaptability across the entire network.

By cultivating diverse, forward-looking leadership across our network, we will ensure that the IFRC remains relevant, resilient, and capable of meeting the challenges ahead.

Together, these commitments set a clear direction for our IFRC: to strengthen how we are governed, how we support one another, how we protect our people, how we act as one Movement, and how we prepare for the future. They are not isolated priorities, but shared responsibilities — **each reinforcing the resilience, credibility, and unity of our network.**

GET TO KNOW KATE FORBES



Kate Forbes is a lifelong humanitarian and accomplished business leader whose career has been defined by integrity, accountability, and service. She brings a distinctive perspective to humanitarian leadership, shaped by her professional roots as an auditor, where precision, discipline, and a deep respect for stewardship are essential. **For Kate, numbers are not abstract; they are tools for responsibility, transparency, and ultimately, for strengthening the effectiveness of humanitarian action.**

She leads with an inclusive, listening-driven approach, grounded in the values of the Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement. Her leadership reflects a clear conviction: that strong systems, sound governance, and ethical risk management are not bureaucratic necessities, but enablers of trust, impact, and protection for those most in need.

What sets Kate apart is her ability to bridge financial rigor with humanitarian purpose. Across both corporate and non-profit sectors, she has guided institutions through complex transformations, strengthened accountability frameworks, and embedded risk management practices that safeguard not only resources, but people and reputation. Her background has shaped a leadership style that is both disciplined and deeply

human, ensuring that every decision ultimately serves communities with greater effectiveness and dignity.

Her journey with the Red Cross and Red Crescent began through volunteer service with the American Red Cross, where she held leadership roles at local, regional, and national levels. As National Chairman of Volunteers, she mobilised more than one million volunteers, demonstrating her ability to translate systems and structure into meaningful, community-level impact. She later brought this experience to the global stage in Geneva, serving on the IFRC Governing Board, Finance Commission, and Audit and Risk Commission, where she contributed to strengthening accountability and strategic direction across the IFRC network.

As IFRC President, Kate Forbes leads with purpose and humility, placing volunteers and communities at the centre of the organization. She is a strong advocate for the protection of humanitarian workers and for a more resilient, accountable, and inclusive global humanitarian system. **In a time of growing complexity, she brings clarity, ensuring that risk is managed, resources are safeguarded, and humanitarian action remains principled, and effective.**

Through extensive travel across all regions, she has engaged directly with National Societies, staff, volunteers, and communities, reinforcing her belief that listening is the foundation of strong leadership. At the global level, she has represented the IFRC in key international forums, ensuring that the voices and realities of National Societies are heard, respected and considered in global decision-making.

Kate has received numerous recognitions for her contributions, including the DIHAD International Personality Award for Humanitarian Relief, the Harriman Award of the American Red Cross, and the Athena Award.

Her journey reflects a powerful combination of discipline and compassion — **a leader who understands that behind every number is a human life, and that strong, accountable systems are essential to delivering humanity where it is needed most.**

AWARDS AND RECOGNITIONS

TIME100 Most Influential People in Philanthropy

DIHAD International Personality Award for Humanitarian Relief

Order of Merit Medal, Japanese Red Cross Society

City of Santiago Medal, Chile

Order of the Red Cross, 1876, Red Cross Society of Serbia

Golden Medal, Jordan Red Crescent Society

Medal of the Grand Cross, Mexican Red Cross

Medal of Lady Matilde de Obarrio de Mallet, Panama Red Cross

Medal 'Lazos de Vida', Colombian Red Cross

Medal by the Lebanese Red Cross

American Red Cross Harriman Award for Distinguished Volunteer Service

The ATHENA Leadership Award



“In every region I have visited, I have witnessed courage and extraordinary commitment. National Societies are not abstract institutions — they are people serving people, often in the most difficult and fragile conditions. I have heard your call for stability. For continuity. For steady leadership in uncertain times. That is why I have decided to stand for a second term as President of the IFRC. My commitment is to continue leading with integrity, to protect our shared principles, and to strengthen our IFRC together.”

KATE FORBES

