

**PROTECTING ANIMALS FROM DISASTERS -  
A NEW PERSPECTIVE ON HUMANITARIAN RELIEF**

by

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Mr. Secretary General, Dr. Al Hadid, Excellencies, I come to you today to propose a new partnership as a tool to improve how we do emergencies, namely through streamlining animal welfare with humanitarian relief. I also propose a formal working relationship between our network of 850 animal welfare NGOs known as the World Society for the Protection of Animals or WSPA and your global movement, for our mutual benefit.

WSPA is the world's largest animal welfare network with a quarter century of experience in disasters and wars. Many of our member societies trace their roots into the 19<sup>th</sup> century and many are in modest economies, often in small town, which is a strength because like the Red Cross movement, we are community based.

Thirty five years as a humanitarian in conflicts and natural disasters has certainly illustrated to me the great value of your movement, with which I've worked closely on such issues as the development of humanitarian law but also on specific emergencies like the Iraq conflict. Those same experiences, some as being the former Policy Adviser on Disaster Management at the US Department of State, have shown time and

again that it is a false decision to separate humanitarian relief and animal welfare. Indeed, the poor way we usually handle animals in emergencies often endangers people not only during the crisis; but also in the recovery phase.

Not getting animal welfare right increases poverty and stifles nutrition. Animals who are not treated well produce less milk. Today in Darfur donkeys are the local trucks. If you over work them, beat them, mistreat them, they will carry less, even die. Preserve the donkey and something is done to preserve local economies.

As many have already noted, the mistakes of the Rwanda crisis caused a paradigm shift in how we looked at humanitarianism, certainly true as well with the advent of the Iraqi war. The principle of *humanity* requires the preservation of the humanitarian nature of operations—i.e., “to protect life and ease suffering.” But Excellencies, preserving humans is and must be more than simply protecting the physical person. It also needs to be about protecting the person’s culture, food supply and means of a living. As the Darfur example illustrates, practical animal welfare policy actually does that and in the context of risk reduction sets the stage for sustainable recovery. That last point is something every disaster manager wants, not simply to rescue but also to set the stage for recovery and a bright future. Like my friend Peter Walker of the Feinstein International Famine Center at Tufts University, I am suggesting a reinvention of humanitarianism, “a doctrine that resonates across all cultures.”

It is appropriate that I give this speech here. I was born in an Arab country, Lebanon and have lived often in Egypt and traveled long in Sudan, in Jordan and Palestine. Only a few doors from this hotel is where my father first studied Arabic. Some of my best friends are the Alegat Bedouin of the Sinai, of whom I am an honorary

member. Many of the Alegat depend entirely on goats for a living, for nutrition. In all of your countries are people like that. Take their goats, horses, camels or poultry away and they have nothing. Indeed, Excellencies, the Food and Agricultural Organization or FAO tells us that about a billion of the world's poorest people totally depend on animals for income, many more for food, social status or cultural identification, as well as companionship and security. Many experts also believe that 852 million people do not get enough to eat. Indeed hunger and malnutrition kill more people than AIDS, malaria and TB combined.

Recognizing these realities, experts from UNHCR, the High Commissioner for Refugees, FAO, the Food and Agricultural Organization, the OIE, OECD and many UN agencies joined together to form a committee led by WSPA and UNESCO. Together, we drafted a document on the need to protect animals in disasters. This document is in your briefing material. The point here is that experts in the humanitarian disaster community are already starting to see the benefits of protecting animals. Our members are also working directly with UN agencies. As an example, one of our member societies, SPANA, provides free veterinary care to working animals and educates children and owners on how to care for them properly in places like Timbuktu. Recently UNHCR in Chad asked them to create a strategic plan for dealing with livestock in emergencies, as competition for natural resources between the various human populations was resulting in livestock management problems. SPANA also just completed a field trip to Eastern Chad, into which hundreds of thousands of refugees have fled from neighboring Darfur.

What all of our member societies have seen time and again is that Disaster victims will often protect their animals even to their own detriment. You have probably seen it as well. Pakistan is a place where for many earthquake victims, losing animals is a true economic catastrophe, enough so that families will share their limited rations with their livestock, even their shelter. That creates serious sanitation and nutrition issues, which could have been minimized if as a matter of policy, trained animal welfare professionals entered the emergency along side the UN and the Red Cross movement. In 1999 in Iraq the agricultural sector was hit by the worst drought in 60 years -- decimating cattle and crops. Today as we speak, Iraq is similarly under water. Better use of land, sometimes better constructed bore holes, better training or perhaps choices of breeds of animals can reduce losses of livestock and thus preserve the human condition. Animal welfare professionals such as the WSPA network can help, creating a foundation for both animals and people to thrive, and one in keeping with the principles of the UN's Hyogo Framework, represented today by Salvano Brisenio.

Returning to my original point therefore, what is needed to fully serve your clients, the human victims of disasters and wars, is to streamline animal welfare into humanitarian relief to mutual advantage. Indeed, streamlining must be seen as true humanitarian assistance. This is why I come to you today to formally offer a partnership that bridges our community with yours so that the dream of Henry Dunant really can be met.

WSPA proposes to work with you to develop a pilot project that proves my concept, one in which professional animal welfare bodies, some of whom operate right here in Tunis, would work right alongside of your workers. We also propose to work on

a joint set of practical operational guidelines, which not only would be used by your great movement but also by all of the partners with the United Nations. We are advancing the same idea with the UN's Interagency Standing Committee (IASC) and the UN's International Strategy on Disaster Reduction (ISDR). The goal of this grand partnership is to truly uplift humanity at the same time that we improve the lives of animals.

Another example. In March 2003, WSPA launched a collaboration to provide free veterinary care for working horses and donkeys in the southern Afghan city of Jalalabad. The project also included an education and training program. In that city thousands of people work with horses and donkeys and entire families depend on these animals for their livelihood. This collaboration reduced the death rate in Equines by over 80%, saving many jobs. That's real humanitarian relief because each horse we saved was the sole source of income for a poor family. No horse, no income. No income, no hope.

These have mainly been disaster response examples but of course any professional disaster manager knows we must also advance preparedness and risk reduction. In Argentina at the request of the then President of the Senate Commission on Livestock, we developed a 2 year risk reduction pilot project for the province of Santa Fe in order to protect cattle and therefore the cattle industry, affected by periodic flooding from the Parana Complex (millions of hectares of lush, floodable pastures).

We expect to complete that project this year. The local chapter of the Red Cross movement is also looking at our work as a model. This work was done not only WSPA

itself but by local member societies in cooperation with the Cavalry & Veterinary Division of the Argentinean Army.

So how do we proceed next? What I propose today is a simple starting gate. First of all, we know that in many of your countries people and animals are impacted by earthquakes, fires, droughts and armed conflict. In addition, we know that there are risks for emerging diseases such as avian flu, which according to some experts is now endemic in Egypt.

My good friend and yours Dr. Muhammed Al-Hadid has suggested we have a workshop in Amman this fall to work out the mechanics of this streamlining partnership and a pilot project in 2009, as well as begin the process of documenting best practices that serve our mutual interests, practices to be unified with the UN and of course SPHERE.

We also need to sort out the details of how we can craft cooperation and partnerships where and when relevant and that are clearly needs based. I recently had occasion to discuss this idea with senior staff at the World Food Program and the Food and Agriculture Organization, as well as ISDR, OCHA, the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Assistance, who were supportive. I'd like to invite those agencies to the work shop, as well as IterAction, which represents all of the major humanitarian NGOs who have offices in the US. We have been developing this notion of streamlining with a number of major humanitarian NGOs. After all, we are talking about a grand partnership that helps us all. It therefore must be done as a team.

But I think Dr. Al-Hadid is proposing not a grand conference, rather a practical, roll-up-your sleeves type of event. Nor are we suggesting the movement change its

core mission. We are instead developing a tool and a fresh partnership. I therefore recommend we all concur with Dr. Al-Hadid's great recommendation and join him in Jordan for the workshop, to improve humanitarian work – the dream of Henry Dunant, by streamlining animal welfare into humanitarian relief. We will also bring ourselves as co-chair and invite a small number of experts from some of our member societies that work in your countries.

Working as a team and in harmony with your ethical principals, which is the best way to solve any problem, we will reduce risks for people and animals in your countries as well as reduce poverty and hunger, preserve culture and minimize the spread of disease.

Thank you again for this great honor. WSPA, the World Society for the Protection of Animals, very much looks forward to working with you as your friend and partner.

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SUBJECT: Major Breakthrough for Animals in Tunis<sup>1</sup>

**Summary:** Since 2005, WSPA had asked the IFRC (International Federation of Red Cross Red Crescent Societies) to integrate the animal welfare and humanitarian agendas. On March 20<sup>th</sup> 2008 in Tunis, the 36<sup>th</sup> General Assembly of Arab IFRC Societies decided that “it was important to protect animals from disasters.” The potential benefit to animals was breathtaking. The fact that Arabs did this rather than Europeans could prove transformative. The General Assembly also agreed to a suggestion by the Chairman of the IFRC Standing Commission for an implementing workshop in Jordan in late 2008. The Assembly then agreed to consider a Sudan Red Crescent request for a pilot project in 2009 under WSPA network coordination.

**Why Is Tunis Important?** According to Ambassador Chris Lamb, Special Assistant to the Secretary General of the IFRC, this was the first time any IFRC assembly had made such pro-animal statements. That could lead to similar support from the UN, humanitarian NGOs and governments

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<sup>1</sup> Note coordinated with Chris Lamb, IFRC  
Speech by Larry Winter Roeder, Jr., MS, UN Affairs Director, WSPA – Proceedings of the 36<sup>th</sup> General Assembly of Arab IFRC Societies

The IFRC is hugely influential because it is considered the world's largest humanitarian network, annually assisting over thirty million disaster victims. The IFRC sits on the UN's InterAgency Standing Committee, which sets UN relief policy. The movement also helped develop SPHERE, the standing operating procedures for humanitarian relief. There is also the potential for significant institutional funding and resource sharing downstream from governments, the UN, the movement and the EC.