



## Historic Partnership Opens New Opportunities to Service

Lions Clubs International and the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC) have partnered in a historic and exciting Memorandum of Understanding (MOA). At the March 27 ceremony in Geneva, Switzerland, marking this joint venture, President Albert F. Brandel explained how this natural collaboration evolved. “Lions Clubs International and its network of 44,000 clubs in 205 countries has long provided relief to victims of natural disasters.” He believes that the agreement between the two global forces will “further strengthen our ability to respond in time of need and should be viewed as mutually beneficial.”

According to IFRC Secretary General Bekele Geleta, “Well-trained volunteers can achieve positive and sustainable changes in their communities because they are there before, during and after disaster strikes. They can make a real difference in reducing the impact of disasters and play a vital role in empowering communities to be prepared for crisis.” Lions will be able to participate in IFRC disaster preparedness training, which will in turn, work for the successful formation of Lions ALERT teams.

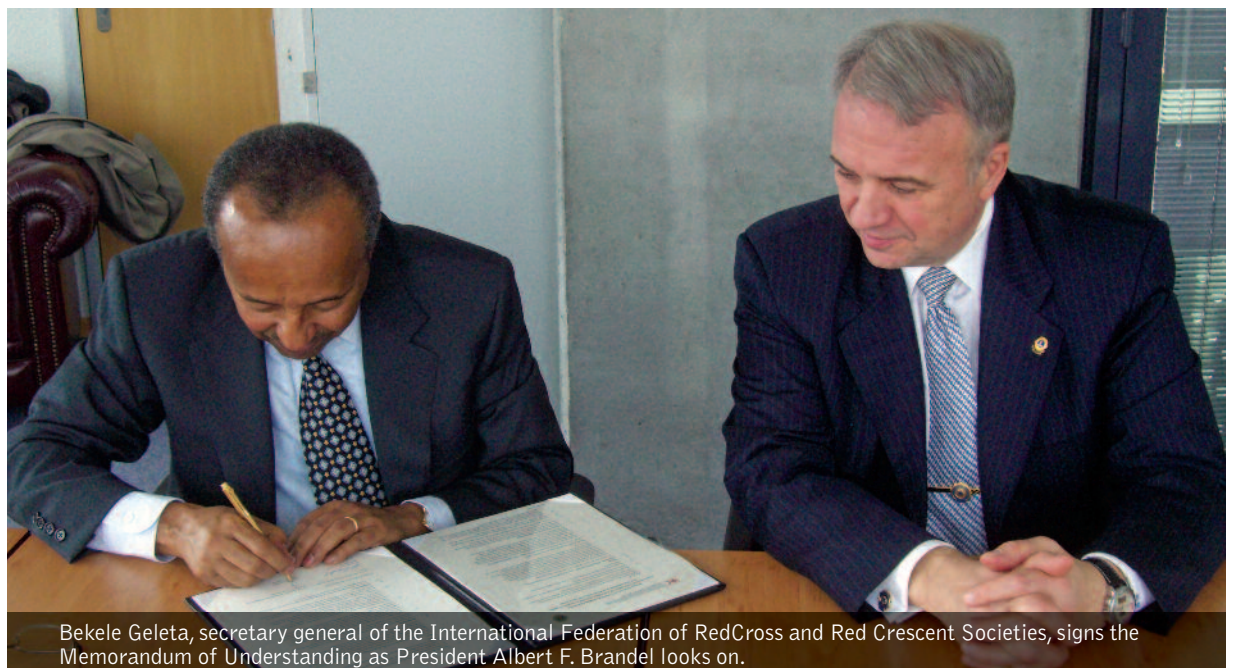
The Lions ALERT program, established in 2006, is intended to facilitate immediate response when urgency matters. It helps Lions develop a plan of action on three emergency levels—one, affecting a few people; two, affecting a community; and three, an emergency that affects hundreds or thousands of people in a region.

Lions are known for giving immediate attention when disaster strikes. A total of 25 percent of Lions clubs world-

wide participated in disaster relief projects during 2007-08, quickly mobilizing to personally offer assistance, raise funds or otherwise be of help when an urgent situation arose. For nine months after the World Trade Center disaster in 2001, New York Lions worked round the clock to provide relief to first responders and families of those lost at Ground Zero. Lions also responded to the Southeast Asian tsunami, Hurricane Katrina and other worldwide natural disasters.

The Lions partnership with IFRC, whose historic timeline closely matches Lions Clubs International, will help ensure that crucial components of assistance are not lost when disasters strike anywhere in the world. There will be many opportunities for Lions to learn disaster training—serving on an IFRC Community Advisory Council; organizing IFRC blood drives; helping to identify vulnerable populations within communities that would require extra assistance in case of disaster; assisting in IFRC community-wide emergency drills and now helping to educate the public about pandemic influenza.

Lions who complete IFRC disaster relief training and are credentialed relief workers can help perform a variety of services within their own communities. Since many clubs operate their own clubhouses, these would ideally serve as IFRC emergency shelters for victims and rescue workers in times of critical need and be staffed by trained Lions. Placing a Lions ALERT sign at the shelter would identify it as a place of safety for both volunteers and victims. ■



Bekele Geleta, secretary general of the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, signs the Memorandum of Understanding as President Albert F. Brandel looks on.