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M. Gilles Carbonnier, Vice-President of ICRC  
Mme. Stéphanie Lambert, Director of Croix-Rouge genevoise  
M. Olivier Couteau, From the "Genève Internationale"  
M. Martin Hoppe, from the City of Hanau  
Members of the Governing Board of IFRC

Distinguished guests, colleagues, ladies and gentlemen

It is a great honor to speak on this occasion of the exhibition to commemorate 200 years of Louis Appia birth anniversary.

It is also my pleasure to welcome you in the new IFRC Headquarters to start the celebrations. As you can see we are still in the final construction phase. But soon we are proud host all our Geneva based staff members, and additionally also staff to the ICRC and some volunteering activities of the Croix-Rouge genevoise. This is a symbol of Unity, a fundamental principles of our Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement.

Today we are here to commemorate the life of Louis Appia. And I would like to tell you a story how Louis Appia started his work. As an Italian Red Cross volunteer, this story is very close to my heart.

In July 1866, when war broke out between Italy and Austria, Louis Appia, a Swiss surgeon, decided to leave Geneva to go to Italy and to tend to the wounded. He travelled to join his brother George in Pinerolo, where they assembled a small team of helpers. He got the mandate from the Milan Relief Committee (the future Italian Red Cross) that allowed him to introduce himself to Garibaldi - on behalf of the Red Cross - on 20 July in Storo.

He was in action the day after, in the wake of the Battle of Bezzocca. As Garibaldi's army retreated, the painful question of the fate of the wounded arose. Should they be abandoned to the enemy? The Austrians had not yet signed the Geneva Convention. Louis Appia and his crew decided to stay near the front as long as they could, in the hope that the sign of the Red Cross would protect them. I invite you to look at the banner 15 with the photo of that event.

The experiences that Louis Appia made in Italy made a lasting impression on him. Since 1848, when he had tended to the wounded of the Paris and Frankfurt revolutions, he had seen the importance of acting as quickly and as closely to the battlefield as possible.

Louis Appia became known as the pioneer of first aid, with his makeshift ambulance and basic equipment. In his book *The Ambulance Surgeon* he set out the basic precepts of care, especially for firearm wounds, in emergency situations. He developed military medicine and experimented with stretchers and bandaging techniques which were suited to the battlefield.

This pioneering spirit of his can also be found in the field of public and social hygiene. Through his experience as a country and city doctor to the poorest, he demonstrated the need to respect basic hygiene, especially with children and in vulnerable families. Very early on, he promoted hygiene and maternal and child care, and sensible alcohol consumption. He taught, published and lectured to share his vision and experience in saving lives.

It is this practical and common-sense spirit that – today – is the hallmark of first aiders all over the world. It is at the core of the work of National Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies. In 2018, wouldn't he be proud to see First Aid taught from primary school onwards, with specialized First Aid at sea and in the mountains, and with fleets of thousands of ambulances which are able to respond so fast, wherever and whenever they are needed?

Today, as Louis Appia imagined and surely envisaged, First Aid continues to provide vital support to families and vulnerable children in distress, whether in their everyday life or in time of disaster. First Aid is a core activity of Red Cross and Red Crescent National Societies, who recognize its importance for the provision of immediate care in emergencies, as well as for the prevention of injuries or accidents through education and crisis management.

National Societies have also continued to update their programmes in response to changing local contexts and demands, to developments in science and technology, and to evidence on the best practice of First Aid. And how pleasantly surprised he would be now, in 2018, to see the use of virtual reality in First Aid education!

It is this legacy that the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, with all its National Societies in more than 190 countries, now puts into practice each and every day in its work in First Aid. We are proud to see the spirit of Louis Appia live on!

Thank you for your attention