

M I S C E L L A N E O U S

N.G.O. CONFERENCE ON INTERNATIONAL YEAR FOR HUMAN RIGHTS

A Conference convened by the Geneva International Committee of Non-Governmental Organizations for the International Year for Human Rights, was held in Geneva from January 29-31, 1968. It was attended by more than 90 institutions, and was split into four working commissions. The final session, in plenum, adopted most of the conclusions which will be submitted to the United Nations International Conference on Human Rights in Teheran in April 1968.

The *International Review* wishes to draw readers' attention to the importance of conclusion number 5 emphasizing the necessity to disseminate and apply the 1949 Geneva Conventions:

Only in peacetime can human rights be fully respected; war is their negation. It is the mission of the United Nations to prevent armed conflict and to institute an effective system for the peaceful settlement of international disputes. Until this aim is fully achieved, it is essential that humanitarian principles should be respected in every armed conflict. The Geneva Conventions of 1949, adopted under the aegis of the Red Cross, lay down the minimum rules of humanitarian conduct on the part of belligerents; at the present time they constitute the essential instrument available for the protection of human rights in time of war. The observance of these rules by all parties involved in a conflict, whether international or internal in nature, is absolutely imperative. Governments and the United Nations must join their efforts to ensure that the Conventions are known to all and that their provisions are respected in all circumstances.

The Conference notes with regret that the rules relating to the use of weapons date from the Hague Conventions of 1907, a time when practically none of the modern weapons of mass destruction, and in particular atomic weapons, existed. A new codification in this field is thus especially necessary for the protection of civilian populations.