

## **CONVOCATION OF THE DIPLOMATIC CONFERENCE**

The Swiss Federal Council has invited all States parties to the Geneva Conventions of 12 August 1949 for the protection of war victims, and all member States of the United Nations to send representatives to the Diplomatic Conference on the Reaffirmation and Development of International Humanitarian Law Applicable in Armed Conflicts, which it is convening to meet in Geneva from 20 February to 29 March 1974.

In its *note verbale* of 24 July 1973, the Swiss Government informed the Ministries of Foreign Affairs that the Conference would consider:

- a draft Additional Protocol to the Geneva Conventions of August 12, 1949, relating to the protection of victims of international armed conflicts, and
- a draft Additional Protocol to the Geneva Conventions of August 12, 1949, relating to the protection of victims of non-international armed conflicts.

It also reminded the Ministries that the twenty-seventh General Assembly of the United Nations, in its Resolution 3032(XXVII), had welcomed “the readiness of the Swiss Federal Council, as communicated to the Secretary-General, to convoke a diplomatic

conference on the reaffirmation and development of international humanitarian law applicable in armed conflicts". It pointed out that the ICRC had been directed by the XXIst International Conference of the Red Cross, at Istanbul in 1969, to work out proposals which would reaffirm and develop international humanitarian law applicable in armed conflicts. The ICRC has discharged this mandate in co-operation with the National Red Cross, Red Crescent and Red Lion and Sun Societies, and with the help of government experts who met at the invitation of the ICRC in two conference sessions in 1971 and 1972. The ICRC also took the advice of various consultative expert groups which met in 1973. The draft Protocols will be submitted to the XXIIInd International Conference of the Red Cross at Teheran in November 1973. The comments and conclusions of the Conference will then be transmitted to the Diplomatic Conference. The reports on the two sessions of the Conference of Government Experts have already been published and sent to all Governments and National Red Cross Societies.

The Swiss Government expressed the hope that, in view of the importance and scope of the preparatory work, the Diplomatic Conference would be able to come to a final agreement and that the two Protocols would be open for signature by the plenipotentiaries before the closing of the Conference. However, it is prepared to convene a second session if it should be necessary to do so after all the important points of the two Protocols have been thoroughly examined. The second session would then take place at the same period in 1975.

The Conference is expected to split up into three commissions to consider the articles of the draft Protocols, namely:

- Commission I: general provisions;
- Commission II: wounded, sick and shipwrecked persons, civil defence, relief;
- Commission III: civilian population, methods and means of combat, new category of prisoners of war.

Switzerland being the birthplace of the Red Cross and the seat of the ICRC, the Swiss Government expressed the earnest hope that all the invited Governments would accept its invitation to participate in the Conference in order to reinforce and develop the protection extended to the victims of war by the Geneva Conventions of 1949. It informed those Governments that it had appointed Mr. Jean Humbert, Ambassador, former Permanent Representative of Switzerland to the International Organizations in Geneva, as General Commissioner of the Diplomatic Conference.

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