

IVth session of the General Assembly of the League

From 14 to 26 October 1985 representatives from 130 National Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (approximately 500 delegates) attended the statutory meetings, the IVth session of the General Assembly of the League and the Council of Delegates of the International Red Cross, held in the premises of the International Labour Office in Geneva.

In his opening address the President of the League, Mr. Enrique de la Mata, paid tribute to the thousands of volunteers for their very effective work over the past two years in times of natural and man-made disasters. He said to the delegates, "We must try and improve our services to the community to the point of perfection", and encouraged them to speak out freely on failures and shortcomings.

The President of the League said furthermore, "The Movement should strive not only to mitigate but also to prevent all kinds of violence causing suffering".

One of the first decisions adopted by the Assembly was to admit the Sao Tome and Principe Red Cross as the 137th member of the League and to confirm the admission of five other National Societies, those of Belize, Barbados, Western Samoa, the People's Democratic Republic of Yemen and Cape Verde.

Mr. Hans Høegh, Secretary-General of the League, gave an overview of the past two years which had been very active. The League and National Societies had carried out several large-scale relief operations. With an eye to the future, Mr. Høegh said one of the priorities was to improve the operational system for co-operation between the League Secretariat and "operating" and "participating" National Societies.

*Strategy for the Eighties:
Appeal for increased efforts*

Following the Secretary-General's statement that there had not been significant progress in the implementation of the "Strategy for the Eighties" since its adoption in Manila in 1981, the delegates appealed to National Societies to take a greater interest in the League's development policy and objectives. The speakers emphasized that it was up to the National Societies to fix their own objectives and encouraged them to draw up detailed plans in order to attain them. The second half of the decade should not go by without more substantial progress being made. One delegate said that more respect should be shown to the beneficiary Societies in bilateral aid projects. "Our countries are poor ... treat us with the dignity we deserve. We do not want charity."

Red Cross and Red Crescent Day 1987

The General Assembly unanimously decided to choose the "Child Alive Programme" for the theme of the World Red Cross and Red Crescent Day on 8 May 1987.

*Racial discrimination:
Reactivating the Plan for Action adopted in 1973*

The General Assembly adopted a decision inviting the Executive Council of the League to follow the implementation of the 1973 plan for action in the struggle against racism and racial discrimination and to submit a report to the Vth session of the Assembly. The National Society that presented the motion stated that discrimination existed in "many countries" and was "the shame of our century".

The Red Cross and Peace

The League Secretariat submitted to the General Assembly some suggestions for the implementation of the recommendations of the Second World Red Cross and Red Crescent Conference on Peace and a programme of work for the International Year of Peace 1986. The two main themes are:

- "Red Cross Youth Action" and
- "Dissemination of the Fundamental Principles of the Red Cross as a Factor of Peace and a Contribution to Peace".

The Assembly took note of this report with satisfaction and passed it on to the Council of Delegates for discussion.

Elections

Mr. Enrique de la Mata (Spanish Red Cross), President of the League, was elected for a second term of office to the post of President of the League of National Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies.

The Assembly also elected the vice-presidents: Dr. Ahmed El Sherif (Libyan Arab Jamahiriya), Mrs. Siga Seye Coulibaly (Senegal), Mr. Abdul Jabbar (Bangladesh), Dr. Fouad Hamza (Syrian Arab Republic), Dr. Valeri A. Baltiyski (USSR), Mrs. Mariapia Fanfani (Italy), Mr. Darrel Jones (Canada) and Dr. M. E. Villar-roel Lander (Venezuela).

The President of the Swiss Red Cross, Mr. Kurt Bolliger, is *ex officio* the ninth Vice-President of the League.

Sixteen Societies were elected members of the Executive Council. For *Africa*: Algeria, Congo, Côte d'Ivoire, Egypt, Sierra Leone; for *Asia*: China, India, Iraq, New Zealand; for *Europe*: Belgium, Finland, France, Yugoslavia; for the *Americas*: Costa Rica, Cuba, USA.

The General Assembly then elected the Treasurer General, the members of the Permanent Scale of Contributions Commission and the Finance Commission.

Treasurer General: Mr. Mehdi Bennouna (Morocco)

Permanent Scale of Contributions Commission

Chairman: Jonkheer G. Kraijenhoff (The Netherlands)

Members: Mr. David A. Balfour (Canada), Shri Ajit Bhowmick (India), Mrs. Mavy A. A. Harmon (Brazil), Mr. Imrich Hatiar (Czechoslovakia), Mr. Z. M. Nkosi (Swaziland) and Mr. D.G. Whyte (New Zealand).

Mr. José M. Loria Sanchez and Dr. Heinrich Treichl (Austria) were invited to participate in the capacity of advisers to this Commission.

Finance Commission

Chairman: Mr. George Elsey (USA)

Members: S.E.M. Hamdi Abu Zeid (Saudi Arabia), Mr. Tadateru Konoe (Japan), Dr. C. Martini Oddone (Paraguay), Mr. Erik Stampe (Denmark) and Mr. Vyacheslay Stanovov (USSR).

Dr. Hartwig Schlegelberger (Federal Republic of Germany) and Dr. François Buyoya (Burundi) were invited to offer their services as advisers to the Finance Commission.

Botho Prince of Sayn-Wittgenstein-Hohenstein, President of the German Red Cross in the Federal Republic of Germany, was appointed League delegate to the "Co-ordinating Body", provided for in the Agreement between the ICRC and the League.

General R.C. Espino, Chairman of the Philippine National Red Cross, was elected League representative on the Standing Commission to replace Dr. F. Buyoya who was appointed adviser to the Finance Commission.

Work of the Commissions

In connection with the Assembly the advisory Commissions met and submitted their reports to the supreme body which took note of them.

Report of the Development Commission

Dr. M. Barra, Chairman of the Development Commission, presented the Report of the Commission which contained the items discussed:

- "speeding up of recognition and admission procedures of National Societies" and the adoption of "concrete measures for support to new National Societies, after 1985, to enable them to fulfil the conditions for recognition and admission";
- "comprehensive participation of the operating and participating National Societies in development (consortia concept) ...";
- "contribution of regional groupings to the development of the National Societies"; and
- "least developed National Societies (concept and assistance programme)".

Report of the Health and Community Services Commission

Mr. M. Bocquet (France), Chairman of the Health and Community Services Commission, presented the Report of the Commission which contained the following points:

- "follow-up to recommendations of the First Session of the Health and Community Services Commission";

- “results of the Working Group Meeting on the Role of the Red Cross and Red Crescent in Mother and Child Health Care in Africa”;
- “participation of National Societies in national immunization programmes”.

Report of the Disaster Relief Commission

Mr. A. Wijkman, Sweden, Chairman of the Disaster Relief Commission, presented the Report on the second Meeting of the Commission.

The Report brought out that disaster prevention and an early warning system, linked to immediate intervention, were as important as the traditional relief operations set up after disasters.

Report of the Youth Commission

Mr. Oscar Zuluaga (Colombia), Chairman of the Youth Commission, presented the report on the second meeting of the Youth Commission which recommended:

- “that the *International Red Cross* study the fate of children touched in their integrity by: compulsory work, prostitution, their use in the battlefield, violations of conscience by certain techniques of communications, physical mutilations, obligation to steal and to beg ...”;
- “that *National Societies* should consider the creation of a Youth Section where none exists and promote its integrated development with all the existing services”;
- “the *General Assembly* to consider the Youth Commission as one of the Commissions to be continued after 1986”.

Statutory matters

The Assembly furthermore unanimously decided to maintain the present League Constitution and not to examine the many proposed amendments to the Constitution and Rules of Procedure. National Societies were of course free to submit amendments if they so desired.

One important point was the revision of the Statutes and Rules of Procedure of the International Red Cross. The Assembly unanimously decided to submit to the XXVth International Conference of the Red Cross the revised draft Statutes and Rules of Procedure

of the International Red Cross that it had before it and which had been approved by the ICRC shortly before.

Lastly the Assembly decided that the Vth Session of the Assembly would be held in Geneva between 17 and 22 October 1986 in the context of the meetings of the XXVth International Conference.

At the end of the Assembly's deliberations the President of the League sent the Secretary-General of the United Nations Organization and the President of the Assembly a message of congratulations on the occasion of the 40th anniversary of the UN which "has relentlessly worked for the improvement of the fate of mankind for forty years." The President of the League said. "The motto of the League is 'Through Humanity to Peace'; the 137 National Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies warmly support the ongoing efforts you make in favour of peace and justice in the world."