

GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE LEAGUE OF RED CROSS AND RED CRESCENT SOCIETIES

The General Assembly of the League held its sixth session from 18 to 20 October 1986 in the presence of representatives from 108 National Societies.

With the President of the League, Mr. Enrique de la Mata, in the chair, the General Assembly unanimously approved the admission of seven new National Societies to membership of the Federation, thereby bringing to 144 the total number of National Societies which are members of the International Red Cross. The new member Societies are the Guinea-Bissau Red Cross, the Red Crescent Society of the United Arab Emirates, the Angola Red Cross, the Guinean Red Cross, the Saint Lucia Red Cross, the Suriname Red Cross and the Red Crescent of Djibouti.¹

A presentation of the League Secretariat's activities was one of the main items on the Assembly's agenda. In his report, the Secretary General of the League, Mr. Hans Hoegh, described it as "a difficult and complex chapter in the history of the League". Certain large-scale relief operations, notably in Africa, have had to be scaled down in 1986 because of a decrease in available funds. Furthermore, staff and management problems have induced the Secretary General to call in an outside organization to make an objective assessment and propose immediate remedial measures.

The comments and criticism which emerged in the debate that followed clearly showed that the League needed to have a strong, well-structured and more professional Secretariat.

The Assembly authorized the President and the Secretary General to study the Secretariat staff recruitment plan, to re-organize as appropriate and to appoint, if necessary, a Deputy Secretary General and a Director for Operations.

The Secretary General's report was considered to be direct, sincere and constructive and was finally approved by acclamation.

¹ The *International Review* published the circulars announcing recognition of the National Societies of Guinea-Bissau and the United Arab Emirates in the September-October issue (pp. 280-283). Given the large amount of material in the present issue, the circulars announcing recognition of the National Societies of Angola, Guinea, Saint Lucia, Suriname and Djibouti will appear in the next issue of the *Review*.

The Assembly approved the League's 1987 Budget which came to 23,150,000 Swiss francs. It also decided to extend the terms of reference of the present consultative system and to appoint a commission consisting of eleven National Societies to study the amendments to the Constitution of the League and examine the consultative system. In addition, the Assembly entrusted an *ad hoc* Committee consisting of five National Societies with the task of studying all the reports submitted to the Executive Council on relief activities in Africa between 1984 and 1986 and to make its views known at the next session of the Executive Council.

After having adopted the reports and recommendations of the Youth, Development, Relief and Health and Community Services Commissions, the General Assembly took note of an interim report on the implementation of the "Plan of Red Cross and Red Crescent Action in the Struggle Against Racism and Racial Discrimination" presented by the League's Secretary General.

The South African Red Cross Society informed the General Assembly that it was the only body in South Africa accepted by all groups and that, although its task was not easy, it had tried to develop a working relationship with the government authorities to enable it to perform its duties. The South African Red Cross Society emphasized that it was independent of the government and that it acted fully in conformity with the principles of the Red Cross.

Several delegations expressed their support for the efforts undertaken by the South African Red Cross Society and called for "more support to help it during these very difficult times". Delegations also called for immediate action to be taken to assist the thousands of displaced persons in the region. The South African President repeated his Society's willingness to welcome the commission of enquiry that the previous General Assembly had considered sending to South Africa.

The Assembly also approved the Third Programme of Action of the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement with respect to dissemination of international humanitarian law and of the principles and ideals of the Movement (1986-1990) before presenting it to the Twenty-fifth International Conference.

Finally, amongst the thirty or so decisions adopted by the Assembly we would draw attention to the one proposing that the 1988 World Red Cross and Red Crescent Day be devoted to Development.

The next session of the General Assembly will be held in Rio de Janeiro in 1987.