

THIRTEENTH INTER-AMERICAN CONFERENCE OF THE RED CROSS

The Thirteenth Inter-American Conference of the Red Cross, a statutory meeting of the League, was held in Quito from 30 June to 3 July. Ninety representatives from 21 National Societies in the Americas took part in the Conference, together with observers from European Societies (Spain and Finland) and the General Secretariat of the Arab Red Crescent and Red Cross Societies, the ICRC and the League.

The League delegation was represented by its President, Mr. Enrique de la Mata, and its Secretary General, Mr. Hans Høegh. The ICRC delegation was led by the President, Mr. Cornelio Sommaruga, accompanied by Mr. Moreillon, Mr. Bornet, Mr. Corthésy, Mr. Zeller, regional delegate in Bogotá, and Mr. Bigler, the delegate in charge of dissemination in Latin America.

In the absence of President Febres Cordero, the Conference was officially opened by Dr. José Tohme Amador, Ecuador's Minister of Health. At the opening meeting, President Sommaruga delivered a speech emphasizing the unity which exists and must exist within the Movement—unity in action and in respect for the Fundamental Principles—despite numerous political and economic obstacles; in this connection he pointed to the responsibility incumbent on each of the Movement's components. The appeal for humanitarian mobilization launched by the ICRC in 1985 was also referred to.

Under the Chairmanship of Dr. Hugo Merino Grijalva, President of the Ecuadorian Red Cross, the Conference dealt mainly with the concerns of National Societies in the region; these centred on assistance for refugees, disaster relief operations, voluntary services, primary health care, drug abuse, development, international humanitarian law, the Movement's Fundamental Principles, dissemination and the place of young people in Red Cross activities.

In his report, Mr. Jean-Marc Bornet, delegate general for Latin America and the Caribbean, stressed the ICRC's general concern about civilians, who have become the pawns of modern conflicts and who suffer their direct consequences: on the one hand, the displacement of persons, and on the other the phenomenon of forced disappearances. The speaker emphasized the Movement's responsibility in that connection.

Under the agenda item on dissemination, Mr. Jacques Moreillon, ICRC Director-General, recalled the importance of the Additional Protocols and the need for the largest possible number of States to become party to them. Mr. Bigler then gave a talk on the ICRC's objectives in the sphere of dissemination and how they could be achieved.

Amongst its conclusions, the Thirteenth Inter-American Conference of the Red Cross launched an earnest appeal for the victims of armed conflicts and internal disturbances to be protected. It also underlined the need for establishing a development strategy for National Societies in Latin America and the Caribbean, especially within the context of long-term national planning.

The Quito conference provided an opportunity for the new President of the ICRC and the new delegate general for Latin America to introduce themselves to the National Societies of the Americas and to have discussions with their leading members.
