

Eighth Conference of Heads of State or Government of non-aligned countries

The President of the ICRC attended the eighth summit meeting of non-aligned countries, held in Harare (Zimbabwe) from 1 to 6 September, where he had discussions on humanitarian matters with some twenty Heads of State and Ministers of Foreign Affairs. He was accompanied by Mr. A. Pasquier, Director of Operations, Mr. M. Veuthey, Head of the Division of International Organizations, and his Deputy, Mr. J.-D. Biéler, with support from Mr. U.G. Bédert, ICRC regional delegate based in Harare.

The Chairman of the Conference and the Movement of non-aligned countries, the Prime Minister of Zimbabwe, Mr. Robert Mugabe, launched an appeal, in his opening speech, for respect for international humanitarian law in the Gulf conflict.

In the course of this mission, the President of the ICRC visited the headquarters of the Zimbabwe Red Cross, where he was welcomed by Secretary General, Mr. Olivier Kuwana, surrounded by senior members of his staff.

International Congress on “Peace and Humanitarian Actions”

The United Nations decided that 1986 would be the International Year of Peace. On this occasion, the International Institute of Humanitarian Law organized an International Congress on “Peace and Humanitarian Actions”, which was held from 3 to 6 September 1986 in San Remo. The Congress was followed by a Red Cross and Red Crescent Symposium.

Under the high patronage of the President of the Italian Republic, the Congress welcomed some 125 representatives of governmental and non-governmental international organizations, permanent missions to the United Nations in Geneva, National Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, the ICRC and the League, and members of the academic institutions and experts involved in humanitarian work.

At the opening ceremony, a message from the President of the Italian Republic was read to all participants and speeches were made by representatives of Liguria, the Province of Imperia and the city of San Remo, by Mr. Eric Suy, Director General of the

European Office of the United Nations and UN Secretary General's personal representative, by Mr. Keba Mbaye, judge at the International Court of Justice, by 1974 Nobel Peace prizewinner Sean McBride, and by the President of the International Institute of Humanitarian Law, Professor Jovića Patrnoć.

Professor Patrnoć recalled that the object of the Congress was to help representatives of organizations involved in humanitarian activities to reflect upon their contributions to the promotion and maintenance of peace and to gain a better insight into future prospects for humanitarian action, in order to improve its efficiency and impact.

The representatives of the specialized agencies of United Nations and of the inter-governmental and non-governmental organizations in turn took the floor, from the second day of the Congress onwards, to present their respective organizations' contributions to peace.

They all emphasized that over the past forty years the main objective of the community of nations and the organizations mentioned above had been the maintenance and the establishment of true peace based on international solidarity.

The number and variety of humanitarian activities undertaken to help the victims of natural disasters, the deterioration of the environment, poverty and famine, armed conflicts and other man-made disasters bore witness to the close link between respect for human rights and the establishment of true peace.

There was an urgent need to find appropriate means of alleviating the suffering caused by war, mass migration, the movement of refugees, economic depression and tensions caused by racial discrimination and exploitation in its many forms, but some organizations expressed the wish that closer attention also be given to examining the causes of these phenomena, so as to prevent them or at least be better prepared to cope with them.

The last day of the Congress was devoted to joint presentations by the Chairman of the Standing Commission of the International Red Cross, the ICRC, the League and the National Societies.

First Mr. Ahmed Abu Goura, Chairman of the Standing Commission of the International Red Cross, expressed the wish that mutual understanding, dialogue and a spirit of peace be furthered, especially among young people. It was the role of the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement to foster a firmer commitment by its members to the promotion of peace and greater solidarity.

The Vice-President of the ICRC, Mr. Maurice Aubert, recalled that the ICRC's attitude to the escalation of violence in many countries has been unrelentingly to urge States, peoples and combatants alike to respect international humanitarian law and to apply the Geneva Conventions and their Additional Protocols: this would ensure that there remained some haven of humanity between the parties to a conflict and enable a neutral intermediary such as the ICRC to accomplish its humanitarian task.

The alleviation of suffering and the achievement of respect for the victims were only indirect contributions to peace, but nevertheless remained tangible and realistic actions on the road to true peace.

The President of the League of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, Mr. Enrique de la Mata, emphasized the challenge represented by the Movement's action in favour of peace which should be supported with more considerable means. He recalled that the role of the Movement was to promote ideals and wondered whether the time had perhaps come for the Red Cross to update its working methods and focus its activities more closely on new needs arising throughout the world.

Several representatives of National Societies then took part in the general discussion, with reports that testified to the authenticity and variety of ways and means deployed in their respective countries to foster true peace. Some National Societies reiterated the importance of disseminating international humanitarian law first among their members, junior members and schools, and also in universities, the armed forces and the police.

Other National Societies considered that the Movement had valuable resources to draw from, which should be more widely used, especially nowadays when Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies in many countries were confronted with tasks of major importance, such as the reception of refugees and asylum seekers, the rehabilitation of delinquents and fringe groups, and the satisfaction of the basic needs of many destitute populations, in time of peace as well as war.

Several National Societies stated that it was not enough for the Red Cross and Red Crescent to struggle against the rise of prejudice and the spread of hate and violence, even among young children. It was essential to get to grips with some of the causes of conflicts and try and prevent their occurrence. A few National Societies hoped that the Movement would take a more active share

in the peaceful settlement of disputes and contribute to it according to its means and in compliance with its fundamental Principles.

A *Peace Ceremony* was held during the Congress at the Nobel Villa, during which the title of Honorary Member of the Institute was awarded to the Nobel Foundation.

The Prize awarded by the Institute for the promotion, dissemination and teaching of international humanitarian law was presented this year to Professor Kusumaatmadja Mochtar, Minister of Foreign Affairs of Indonesia. Two ICRC delegates, Mr. Roland Hammer and Mr. Paul Früh, were awarded *cum laude* certificates expressing the Institute's appreciation of the dissemination work they had accomplished in the field.

In its *conclusions*, the Congress reaffirmed the definition of peace adopted by the Round Table of institutions that had won the 1978 Nobel Peace Prize, namely that "Peace is a dynamic set of relationships of coexistence and co-operation among and within peoples, characterized not only by the absence of armed conflict, but also by the respect for the human values set forth particularly in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, with the concern to provide the greatest possible wellbeing for all".

The Congress also recalled that if humanitarian actions were aimed primarily at alleviating human suffering, they also strove to eliminate the causes of such suffering.

When carrying out humanitarian activities in the legal, social, cultural and material aid fields, all institutions concerned must co-ordinate their efforts.

The *Red Cross and Red Crescent Symposium*, chaired by the President of the ICRC, Mr. Alexandre Hay, included a detailed and very informative talk on the forthcoming International Red Cross Conference by Mr. Jacques Moreillon, Director General at the ICRC, who recalled the contribution of successive International Conferences to the life and activities of the Movement.

In this connection, the League Secretary General, Mr. Hans Hoegh, stressed the increased role, acknowledged by governments, of the Red Cross and Red Crescent within many local and national communities.

The discussion that followed enabled several representatives of National Societies to inquire into questions of procedure regarding the organization of the Conference and matters of substance concerning topics of current importance.