

## SEVERAL MAJOR HUMANITARIAN ISSUES DEALT WITH BY THE TWENTY-FIFTH INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE OF THE RED CROSS

*It is true that the Twenty-fifth International Conference of the Red Cross (October 1986), the work of which was extensively reported by the International Review of the Red Cross in its special November-December 1986 issue, was marked by the suspension of the South African government delegation.*

*That event should not, however, be allowed to overshadow the Conference's many achievements, which are as much an expression of the dynamic character of the International Red Cross as of its members' will to pursue and develop its humanitarian mission.*

*Two subjects had a preponderant place in the work of the Twenty-fifth International Conference: the new Statutes for the "International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement", and respect for international humanitarian law.*

*This issue of the Review contains the complete texts of the Movement's Statutes and Rules of Procedure as they were adopted on 31 October 1986 (see pp. 25-59). An off-print is also planned.*

*It is an understatement to say that the new Statutes are an improvement on those of 1952. Among the most significant features is the Preamble which, for the first time in the Movement's legislative history, sets down side by side the constituents of its raison d'être, its purpose and its motivation, namely, its basic mission, its Fundamental Principles, its mottoes and its contribution to peace.*

*The new title "International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement", or "International Red Cross", emphasizes the dynamic character of an institution which has, since its creation, lived for and by universal humanitarian endeavour. Another merit of the Statutes is*

*that they set out clearly the role of each of the Movement's components, especially that of the National Societies, and accentuate the co-operation between the States party to the Geneva Conventions and these components. The adoption of the Statutes by consensus is a good sign.*

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**Respect for international humanitarian law** was once again a major theme of the deliberations. The report on the subject presented on 27 October 1986 by President Hay to the Conference's Commission on International Humanitarian Law is, as announced in the last issue of the Review, published in its entirety in this issue (see pp. 60-79).

The previous issue of the Review contained an account of the lively debate that followed the presentation of the report at the Conference.<sup>1</sup> It should be remembered that the Conference finally adopted by consensus a resolution in which it expressed its profound concern about the difficulties created for the ICRC in its efforts to protect and assist all the military and civilian victims of armed conflicts. The resolution appeals to all Parties involved in armed conflicts to respect fully their obligations under international humanitarian law and to enable the ICRC to carry out its humanitarian activities.

The community of States is aware of these distressing problems. This was demonstrated when the Organization of American States adopted a resolution asking its members to continue their support for the work of the ICRC (see pp. 115-116), while in November last the General Assembly of the United Nations echoed the International Conference of the Red Cross and asked the States parties to the 1949 Geneva Conventions to become party also to the Additional Protocols "at the earliest possible date" (see pp. 117-118).

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Other major questions dealt with by the Twenty-fifth International Conference were the protection of prisoners of war and civilians during armed conflicts, tracing activities and reuniting families. In connection with this, the Review has the pleasure of publish-

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<sup>1</sup> IRRC, No. 762, November-December 1986, pp. 327-329.

ing a study by an ICRC legal expert on **National Information Bureaux**, whose basic task is to collect and transmit all available information on protected persons. The author concentrates on a description and analysis of the legal, convention-based, indirectly convention-based and non-convention-based aspects and the procedure usually followed by the States (see pp. 6-24).

The International Conference also adopted important resolutions on the Protocols additional to the Geneva Conventions, on the dissemination of knowledge of international humanitarian law and the Movement's principles and ideals, and on refugees. The Review will have the opportunity, in later issues in 1987, to analyse, comment upon and illustrate these different subjects.

But at the same time the Review would like to provide more space to the Movement, which has just acquired some **new National Societies** (see pp. 80-89), reporting on what the different components, especially the National Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, are doing and trying to do, what their difficulties are. The work of the Spanish Red Cross in aid of society's dropouts is an initial example (see pp. 101-104) which, we hope, will be followed by many others.

Finally, the Review will endeavour to inform its readers about the great humanitarian goals shared by other humanitarian institutions.

In presenting its best wishes for 1987 to all its readers, the Review will strive, with their help, to increase the Movement's cultural heritage and to strengthen ties between its members.

The Review

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