

Recent Missions by the President of the ICRC

1. Norway and Sweden

In response to invitations by the Red Cross Societies of Norway and Sweden and the respective governments of these countries, ICRC President Cornelio Sommaruga visited Oslo from 24 to 26 January and Stockholm from 27 to 29 January 1988.

In Norway, the President had talks with leaders of the Norwegian Red Cross, notably Mr. Björn Bruland, President, HRH Crown Princess Sonja, Vice-President, Mr. Odd Grann, Secretary General, Mr. A. Torbjornsen, head of the International Department, and Mr. J. Egeland, head of Information. Mr. Sommaruga also had meetings with the following representatives of the Norwegian Government and public administration: Mr. Gunnar Berge, Minister for Finance, Mrs. Gjestebj, Secretary of State at the Ministry for Foreign Affairs, and Mrs. E. Nordbó, Secretary of State to the Prime Minister.

The President and his hosts discussed *inter alia* problems of financing the ICRC. The government representatives informed the President that a special contribution of 12 million Norwegian kroner—about 2.5 million Swiss francs—would be made in response to the appeal for Africa.

The President also explained current problems relating to ratification of the Additional Protocols.

At a press conference, the President outlined the present activities of the ICRC in different parts of the world, in particular Ethiopia, Sudan, Afghanistan, Israel and the occupied territories. The situations in Sri Lanka and Mozambique were also discussed.

President Sommaruga made an address at the Nobel Institute in Oslo on the subject, "Challenges to the implementation of International Humanitarian Law: an operational survey of activities of the International Committee of the Red Cross, from the Middle East to Central America".

He was received in private audience by HM King Olav V of Norway, patron of the Norwegian Red Cross, and Mr. Kåre Willoch, Chairman of the Foreign Affairs Committee of the Storting.

In Sweden, the ICRC President was received by Mrs. G. Goransson, Chairman of the Swedish Red Cross, HRH Princess Christina, Mrs. Magnuson, Vice-Chairman, Mr. A. Wijkman, Secretary General, and Mr. G. Bäckstrand, head of the Department for International Assistance. He discussed with them the question of financing the ICRC and several other subjects concerning the Movement, including National Society development, the information policy of the ICRC and events relating to the 125th anniversary.

The President also had talks with government representatives, including Mr. Pierre Schori, Secretary of State at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and Mr. P. Soderberg, Secretary of State at the Ministry of Development Co-operation.

Mr. Sommaruga expressed his particular appreciation for the generous support given by the Swedish Red Cross and the Swedish government to the special operations of the ICRC. He discussed problems relating to ratification of the Additional Protocols and thanked the Swedish Government for its diplomatic support in this connection.

President Sommaruga, in his talks with representatives of the Swedish Foreign Ministry, the Swedish International Development Agency (SIDA) and the Ministry for Development Co-operation, summarized the current activities of the ICRC.

He visited the rehabilitation centre for victims of torture, run by the National Society.

Finally, the ICRC President made a speech to an audience of scholars and diplomats at the Swedish Institute for Foreign Affairs on the challenges entailed in applying international humanitarian law in ICRC operational practice.

2. Southern Africa

President Sommaruga made official visits to five countries in southern Africa—Tanzania, Zambia, Malawi, Mozambique and Zimbabwe—from 12 to 20 February 1988.

In choosing southern Africa for his first official visit to that continent since assuming office at the head of the ICRC nine months earlier, Mr. Sommaruga wished to show the ICRC's profound concern at the

vast humanitarian needs resulting from conflicts in that part of the world. The great humanitarian problems resulting from mass displacements of the population in the interior of Mozambique and the difficult situation of refugees and persons returning to their homes are special subjects of ICRC concern.

During his visit, the ICRC President met the Heads of State of Tanzania, Zambia, Malawi, Mozambique and Zimbabwe, with whom he had constructive and stimulating discussions on matters which were also followed up in talks with ministers in the five countries.

The President emphasized the specific nature of the international humanitarian mandate of the ICRC, namely to take action with neutrality, independence and impartiality in conflict situations throughout the world, so as to protect and assist all the victims.

Expressing his appreciation for Ministerial Resolution 1059 relating to the ICRC, adopted by the Organization of African Unity (OAU) at Addis Abeba in 1986, Mr. Sommaruga thanked the Heads of State for the support they had given to the humanitarian action of the ICRC and its universally recognized humanitarian principles.

In a meeting at Lusaka with Mr. Kenneth Kaunda, Chairman of the OAU, the President of the ICRC raised a number of subjects of common concern to the two organizations.

At Harare, he had a similar exchange of views on humanitarian problems in Africa and other parts of the world with President Robert Mugabe, in the latter's capacity as Chairman of the Non-Aligned Movement.

The ICRC President had the opportunity of discussing a number of humanitarian subjects with representatives of the African National Congress (ANC), the Pan African Congress (PAC) and the South West Africa People's Organization (SWAPO).

Mr. Sommaruga also visited the headquarters of the National Red Cross Societies at Dar es Salaam, Lusaka, Lilongwe, Maputo and Harare. He discussed their humanitarian activities with their respective executive boards, with a view to increasing the ICRC's contribution in the domain of co-operation with these National Societies. At the end of his visit, expressing his deep concern over the present suffering of the people of Mozambique, which he discussed in detail at Maputo with President Chissano, the President of the ICRC said he was convinced that:

— everyone who cared about the vital humanitarian needs of the civilian population of Mozambique, wherever these women, children and other innocent people may be,

— everyone who had any influence on the events responsible for their tragic suffering,
would understand his appeal and his fervent hope that the ICRC's entire humanitarian activities could be carried out, without hindrance and without delay.

3. Spain

At the invitation of the Spanish Government, President Sommaruga visited Spain from 1 to 5 March.

In Madrid, after being received by Their Majesties King Juan Carlos and Queen Sophia, the ICRC President had several working meetings with representatives of the Spanish Government, including Mr. J. M. Cabrera, Director General for International Organizations and Conferences of the Ministry for Foreign Affairs, Mr. F. Pepina-Robert, Secretary General of the Ministry for Foreign Affairs and Mr. R. Vera Huidoboro, Secretary of State for State Security. The main topics discussed were the current operations of the ICRC, ratification of the Additional Protocols by Spain, the financing of the ICRC and the question of visits to political detainees by ICRC delegates. A contribution of 40 million pesetas—500,000 Swiss francs—was confirmed for the ICRC's regular budget for 1988, double the amount contributed for 1987.

The President of the ICRC was also received by Mr. Felipe González, Prime Minister, and Mr. Francisco Fernández Ordóñez, Minister for Foreign Affairs. The Spanish Premier reaffirmed the country's diplomatic and financial support for the ICRC and said he was in favour of speeding up the procedure for ratification of the Additional Protocols.

Mr. Sommaruga had a working meeting with the directorate of the Spanish Red Cross and with Mr. Leocadio Marín, President of the National Society, and addressed a special plenary meeting of the National Society's supreme assembly.

During his stay the ICRC President also had the opportunity to speak to representatives of the press and audiovisual media and to deliver a speech to a select audience of 200 Madrid notables, including high officials and numerous members of the diplomatic corps, on "The ICRC, between politics and humanitarian action".

Finally, on 3 March, Mr. Sommaruga visited Barcelona, where he was received by Mr. Pascual Maragall, Mayor of the city, by the Director of the Organizing Committee for the 1992 Olympic Games, by Mr. Martí Jusmet, delegate of the Spanish Government in Catalonia, by Mr. A. Bassols, representative of the Government of the Autonomous Region of Catalonia and by the President and Directorate of the Catalan Assembly of the Spanish Red Cross.

The President of the Eastern Republic of Uruguay at the ICRC

Mr. Julio Maria Sanguinetti, President of the Eastern Republic of Uruguay, visited the headquarters of the International Committee of the Red Cross on 16 March 1988.

He was received by the ICRC President, Mr. Cornelio Sommaruga, together with several members of the Committee and other senior ICRC staff. Mr. Pär Stenbäck, Secretary General of the League of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, was also present.

Mr. Sanguinetti raised various questions of humanitarian interest in a private conversation with Mr. Sommaruga.

During his visit, the Uruguayan President was accompanied in particular by Mr. Luis Barrios Tassano, Minister of Foreign Affairs, and Mr. José Maria Araneo, Ambassador and Permanent Representative of Uruguay to the United Nations Office at Geneva.
