

Statutory Meetings of the League

The Twelfth Session of the Executive Council was held on 7 October, the day before the opening of the Third Session of the General Assembly, the supreme decision-making body of the League. The Executive Council basically confined itself to formulating recommendations for the Assembly, as the latter was meeting the following day and it would have to make decisions on recommendations of the Council, decisions concerning the election of the members of the Permanent Scale of Contributions Commission, for instance.

Third session of the General Assembly

The General Assembly was held from 8 to 12 October. It was attended by about 400 delegates from some 130 National Societies. Representatives of Societies in formation were also present.

In his inaugural speech, the President of the League, Mr. Enrique de la Mata Gorostizaga, declared in substance that "the Red Cross must be an instrument of peace", and that in this role it was duty bound to adhere scrupulously to its principles of neutrality and impartiality. He thus shared the current concern for more active Red Cross participation in the search for peace.

During the first plenary meeting, three new Red Crescent and Red Cross Societies, which had previously been recognized by the ICRC, were admitted to the League, those of the Yemen Arab Republic, Rwanda and Zimbabwe. To date, 131 National Societies are members of the League.

The deliberations of the Assembly continued in the following days. Four Commissions were respectively requested to study:

- relief in the event of natural disasters;
- development;

- health and community services;
- youth work.

At the end of their discussions, the Commissions submitted their reports and recommendations to the General Assembly, which adopted them in its plenary session.

Among the important decisions taken by the General Assembly, the following should be mentioned:

- modification of the name of the Federation, which becomes the “League of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies” (adding the words “and Red Crescent” to the previous title);
- approval of the current restructuring of the League Secretariat;
- approval of the budgets of 15.1 million Swiss francs for 1984 and 15.7 million Swiss francs for 1985;
- launching of a study on aid to National Societies in financial difficulties;
- adoption of a new and more intensive programme whereby National Societies and their federation, the League, will endeavour to combat famine, a problem which is becoming increasingly recurrent and affecting the poorest countries in the world more and more severely.

The session ended with an appeal for a world programme to combat infantile mortality due to diarrhoea. The Secretary General, Mr. Hoegh, called for a world action programme to combat this scourge and stressed the importance of educational programmes. By acclamation, the Assembly adopted an action programme which will concentrate both on preventing and curing this disease. Several National Societies, those of the Netherlands, Norway and Sweden, promised financial support for this programme, which will be set up in co-operation with UNICEF and WHO.

Lastly, the “Red Cross Radio Prize”, for the promotion of primary medical care in Africa, was awarded during the Assembly’s first plenary session to the prize-winner, Mr. T. Mengistu, of the Ethiopian Red Cross Radio Education Service.