

When the ICRC adopted a new executive structure in May 1991, general management became the task of three Executive Board members, in charge respectively of Principles, Law and Relations with the Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement, Operations and General Affairs. As Director General, Dr. Fuchs will be responsible for general coordination and matters concerning communication, personnel, finance, administration, data processing and telecommunications.

MISSIONS BY THE PRESIDENT

Mr. Cornelio Sommaruga, President of the ICRC, has conducted a number of missions since the beginning of the year. They have taken him to the United States, to the Council of Europe in Strasbourg, and to Germany, Portugal and Norway.

● **New York (6-8 January 1992)**

From 6 to 8 January, President Sommaruga took part in the opening session of the ninth seminar on international humanitarian law for diplomats accredited to the United Nations. Following the seminar, which was organized jointly by New York University and the ICRC, Mr. Sommaruga met members of the UN Security Council, the new Secretary-General and a number of permanent representatives to the world body.

At a lunch given by the ICRC for Security Council members, Mr. Sommaruga spoke of the regrettable postponement of the International Conference of the Red Cross and Red Crescent and the need for the ICRC to maintain a well-defined framework for multilateral dialogue with the governments. Drawing a distinction between the right to assistance and the "right of intervention", he warned of the danger of politicizing humanitarian endeavour.

He went on to outline the serious financial problems faced by the ICRC in carrying out its work in the territories occupied by Israel, in Afghanistan, in Somalia and elsewhere, appealing to governments to be generous in their contributions.

Mr. Sommaruga then reviewed the ICRC's activities around the world, in particular expressing his concern about Kuwaiti prisoners who had disappeared in Iraq and the plight of the civilian population in that country. He welcomed the recent adoption by the General Assembly of a resolution on strengthening coordination of humanitarian assistance and reiterated the ICRC's desire to work in full and open cooperation with the United Nations, while maintaining the ICRC's independence and its specific character.

In reply, Mr. Thomas L. Richardson, the United Kingdom's ambassador and Security Council President for January, expressed his own appreciation and that of the other Council members for the ICRC's work. He declared that there would be enhanced cooperation between a better coordinated United Nations and an independent ICRC.

President Sommaruga then had talks with Mr. Boutros Boutros Ghali, the UN's new Secretary-General. He told Mr. Boutros Ghali that the ICRC had always appreciated his legal expertise, his humanitarian commitment and his steadfast support for the institution's endeavours.

Praising the General Assembly resolution on strengthening the coordination of humanitarian work while respecting the independence and specificity of the ICRC, President Sommaruga expressed the hope that contacts with the UN in general and its Secretary-General in particular would be maintained and indeed expanded.

The two men then reviewed ICRC activities in various regions of the world affected by armed conflict and its consequences: Somalia, the territories occupied by Israel, Yugoslavia, Western Sahara, East Timor, etc. Mr. Sommaruga deplored the fact that in a number of cases there was some confusion between political negotiations and humanitarian action. This, he said, could be harmful to the victims.

Touching finally on the postponement of the International Conference of the Red Cross and Red Crescent, Mr. Sommaruga stressed the need for the ICRC to continue its dialogue with the States party to the Geneva Conventions, with particular reference to the development, promotion and implementation of international humanitarian law.

The ICRC's New York delegation also organized a number of meetings with permanent representatives to the United Nations, during which President Sommaruga again affirmed that multilateral dialogue with the States was essential.

ICRC operations were discussed, as were the safety of the institution's delegates in the field and its financial concerns.

Finally, Mr. Sommaruga welcomed the General Assembly's recent

resolution on the coordination of humanitarian work and reiterated the ICRC's position on the matter.

An invitation to a meeting of Human Rights Watch — bringing together Africa Watch, Americas Watch, Asia Watch, Helsinki Watch and Middle East Watch — gave Mr. Sommaruga an opportunity to pay tribute to this non-governmental organization and the important work it does to raise awareness of and promote respect for human rights.

Mr. Sommaruga reviewed the institution's main operations with special reference to the Gulf, the ongoing problem of prisoners of war held by Iran and Iraq, the territories occupied by Israel, Yugoslavia, Somalia, East Timor and Peru.

● **Strasbourg (4 February)**

President Sommaruga was accompanied by Mr. Zidane Mériboute, deputy head of the ICRC's International Organizations Division, on a mission to the Council of Europe in Strasbourg on 4 February.

Mr. Sommaruga began by taking up an invitation to attend a meeting of the Committee on Migrations, Refugees and Demography, where he gave a talk on the ICRC's mandate and current activities. He then met Ms. Catherine Lalumière, the Council's Secretary-General, to discuss the cooperation that has grown up between the two institutions. They also reviewed problems relating to humanitarian action, which requires not only the mobilization of the entire international community but also respect on the part of humanitarian organizations for the principles of neutrality and impartiality. Ms. Lalumière described a plan to set up a European system to give early warning of large-scale movements of refugees and displaced persons.

Mr. Sommaruga also met Sir Geoffrey Finsberg, President of the Parliamentary Assembly, Mr. René Felber, Chairman of the Committee of Ministers, and a number of other senior Council officials.

● **Bonn (17-18 February)**

Mr. Sommaruga spent 17 and 18 February in Bonn, where he took part in festivities to mark the 65th birthday of Prince Botho zu Sayn-Wittgenstein-Hohenstein, President of the German Red Cross and member of the Movement's Standing Commission.

At German Red Cross headquarters, he reviewed current ICRC operations with leading officials of the National Society and attended a meeting of the Society's Committee on International Humanitarian Law to discuss the reconvening of the 26th International Conference.

Mr. Sommaruga went to the Ministries of Foreign Affairs and Economic Cooperation where he met, respectively, Ms. Ursula Seiler-Albring, Minister of State, and Ms. Michaela Geiger, State Secretary, to discuss the ICRC's acute financial problems and the question of coordination with the UN in the humanitarian field. Mr. Sommaruga also visited the Bundestag where he was received by Dr. Hans Stercken, Chairman of the Foreign Affairs Committee, and Mr. Friedrich Vogel, Chairman of the Subcommittee on Human Rights and Humanitarian Assistance.

● Lisbon (24-26 February)

Mr. Sommaruga made an official visit to Portugal from 24 to 26 February in the company of Mr. Paul Grossrieder, Deputy Director of Operations.

The ICRC delegation was received during its visit by President Mario Alberto Soares, Prime Minister Aníbal Cavaco Silva, Minister of Foreign Affairs João de Deus Pinheiro and the Secretaries of State for Foreign Affairs and Defence. Mr. Sommaruga and Mr. Grossrieder also had a working meeting at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and held a press conference. At the Portuguese Parliament they met three members of the Foreign Affairs Committee, including its Chairman, Mr. Bareto.

The ICRC President's stay was marked by the Prime Minister's announcement that Portugal had ratified the Additional Protocols. One of the main objectives of this mission was to inform the authorities in Portugal — which will hold the presidency of the European Community's Council of Ministers until July 1992 — about ICRC activities in Yugoslavia, Somalia and the Commonwealth of Independent States and to discuss matters relating to the coordination of humanitarian assistance.

Several subjects of particular interest to Portugal were covered, such as the plight of the civilian population in Mozambique, where the ICRC encounters many difficulties in its work, and problems of humanitarian concern in East Timor.

Mr. Sommaruga also met leading officials of the Portuguese Red Cross with whom he discussed, among other things, the National Society's new draft statutes. Finally, he gave a talk to the Society's staff.

● Oslo (25-27 March)

The ICRC President, accompanied by Mr. Jean-Daniel Tauxe, Delegate General for Africa, and Mr. Christian Kornevall, head of the External Resources Division, was in Norway on 25 to 27 March, where he was received by King Harald V in the presence of the Queen. The ICRC delegation also had talks with Mr. Thorvald Stoltenberg, Minister of Foreign Affairs, Ms. Grete Faremo, Minister of Development Cooperation, and leading officials of the Norwegian Red Cross.

Working meetings were held with National Society officials and with government representatives under the chairmanship of Mr. Jan Egeland, Secretary of State at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The main subjects of these talks were the right of initiative and the "right of intervention", coordinating humanitarian work within the United Nations and between the UN and the ICRC, Norway's support for the ICRC, the institution's operations in Somalia, Mozambique, Israel and the occupied territories, Iran and Eastern Europe, financial matters and the next International Conference of the Red Cross and the Red Crescent.

The ICRC delegation noted that the Norwegian government continued to attach great importance to humanitarian assistance. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs has set up a special department to deal with such matters and has appointed a Secretary of State to lead it. Moreover, 10% of Norway's development aid is earmarked for humanitarian assistance.

The Norwegian government decided to increase its contribution to the ICRC's headquarters budget and will allocate a large sum to the initial 1992 field budget. Over 50% of this will go to ICRC work in Africa.

Mr. Sommaruga gave a talk to officials from various ministries, members of the armed forces, Norwegian Red Cross staff, media representatives and others on the provisions of humanitarian law designed to help war victims and how those rules are implemented in practice.

Finally, the National Society organized a visit to its reception centre for refugees, and the Society's Akerlund branch gave a first-aid demonstration.