

Missions by the President

- In the second half of May 1992, ICRC President Cornelio Sommaruga went to **The Hague** to attend the IVth Regional Conference of European National Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (18-22 May), which took as its theme "The New Europe needs The New Red Cross" (see pp. 391-393). While in The Hague, Mr. Sommaruga had talks with the Netherlands Minister for Foreign Affairs and the Minister for Cooperation Development on various current ICRC operations and on financial matters. The President thanked the government of the Kingdom of the Netherlands for its substantial support for the ICRC in the past and for its commitment to providing financial help in the future. During a working meeting at the Foreign Ministry with officials dealing with various geographical regions and with multilateral cooperation, the prospects for reconvening the 26th International Conference of the Red Cross and Red Crescent were reviewed. The President also had the opportunity, at a lunch given by the Swiss Ambassador to the Netherlands, to talk to the President of the Second Chamber of the Netherlands Parliament and to the Secretary-General of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs about humanitarian needs around the world and the degree of respect shown for international humanitarian law. Mr. Sommaruga was accompanied by Mr. Maurice Aubert, a member of the ICRC, Mr. Yves Sandoz, Director, and Mr. Michel Convers, Deputy Director.
- At the end of May, Mr. Sommaruga visited a major international exhibition in **Genoa** entitled "Christopher Columbus, Ships and the Sea". At the invitation of the Italian government and the Italian Red Cross, the ICRC had mounted a stand explaining the origins and development of humanitarian law, with special reference to the Second Geneva Convention (for the amelioration of the condition of wounded, sick and shipwrecked members of armed forces at sea). The ICRC President inaugurated the stand on 26 May and then attended various events organized by the Italian Red Cross, including an exhibition entitled "The Italian Red Cross and the

Sea". The following day, Mr. Sommaruga visited the Italian Red Cross Museum in Campomorone, near Genoa (see pp. 393-396).

- On 13 June the President went to **Solothurn** to attend the 107th Assembly of the Swiss Red Cross. In an address he referred to Max Huber's maxim *res non verba* (action not words) and called upon the Movement to present a united front, to preserve the special nature of each of its components and to uphold the Red Cross principles in order to face the challenges of the modern world. He stressed the importance of young people and the need for frank acknowledgement of the weaknesses of the Red Cross. He concluded with an appeal for humanitarian mobilization; this, he said, could be achieved by more effective dissemination of humanitarian law and the Fundamental Principles of the Movement.
- On 19 June 1992 in **Nice**, the ICRC President was awarded an honorary doctorate by the University of Nice-Sophia Antipolis, as a tribute to the ICRC's humanitarian work. The award ceremony was presided over by Professor Michel Bornancin, President of the University of Nice-Sophia Antipolis, and attended by Crown Prince Albert of Monaco, Professor André Delaude, President of the French Red Cross, Professor Maurice Torrelli, Dean of the Institute of Peace and Development Law, and Dr. Jean-Claude Vaillaud, Chairman of the French Red Cross Departmental Council for Alpes-Maritimes.

In his address, entitled "Ensuring respect for international humanitarian law - a constant challenge for the ICRC", Mr. Sommaruga described the development of international humanitarian law since the founding of the Red Cross. He went on to stress that the world could no longer tolerate a situation in which the fate of victims of armed conflict depended on the whim of the belligerents. Given the scale of the fighting that was currently devastating many countries, the ICRC President proposed that the States party to the Geneva Conventions should be convened at regular intervals and reminded of their obligation to meet their humanitarian commitments.

The President, who was also received by the Mayor of the City of Nice and by the the Alpes-Maritimes Red Cross, was accompanied by Mrs. Renée Guisan and Mr. Max Daetwyler, members of the ICRC, and Mr. André Pasquier, special adviser.