

## **Nineteenth Conference of Arab Red Crescent and Red Cross Societies (Cairo, 5-9 November 1988)**

The Nineteenth Conference of Arab Red Crescent and Red Cross Societies took place in Cairo from 5 to 9 November 1988.

Held under the patronage of H. E. Hosni Mubarak, President of the Arab Republic of Egypt, this Conference was organized jointly by the Egyptian Red Crescent and the General Secretariat of the Arab Red Crescent and Red Cross Societies, directed by Mr. Abdel Ghani Ashi.

The Conference was attended by the representatives of 18 Arab National Societies as well as observers from 10 National Societies, from governmental organizations and from NGOs.

Headed by Mr. Rudolf Jäckli, ICRC Vice-President, the ICRC delegation was composed of Mr. Francis Junod, delegate in Cairo; Mr. Michel Martin, Head, Division for Principles and Relations with the Movement; Mr. Zidane Mériboute and Mr. Ameer Zémali, members of the Legal Division; and Mr. Werner Kaspar from the External Resources Division.

The League of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies was represented by its President, Mr. Mario Villarroel; its Secretary General, Mr. Pär Stenbäck; the Head of the Administrative Services Department, Mr. William Cassis; and the Head of the North Africa and Middle East Department, Mr. Solayman Eleghmary.

At the opening session, speeches were delivered by H. E. Mrs. Suzanne Mubarak, President of the Egyptian Red Crescent Society; Mr. Abdel Ghani Ashi; and Mr. Hassan Darwish, Secretary General of the Egyptian Red Crescent Society.

The participants then discussed successively the reports submitted by the Secretary General of the Arab Red Crescent and Red Cross Societies, by the League and by the ICRC. In this connection, Mr. Jäckli stressed, *inter alia*, the major commitment of the ICRC in Iran and in Iraq, in the occupied territories and in Lebanon. He also

urged the members of the Conference to ask their governments to ratify the two Protocols additional to the Geneva Conventions, to disseminate knowledge of international humanitarian law and to make a humanitarian gesture in 1989 to mark the Movement's 125th Anniversary (eg. by receiving refugees, improving prison conditions for women, releasing prisoners of war or security detainees). Finally, Mr. Jäckli stressed the importance of ensuring that international humanitarian law is effectively applied by enacting internal laws and regulations and by dissemination, and of full compliance with the rules governing the use of the emblem.

The participants then proceeded to examine the working documents submitted by the National Societies on regional and bilateral co-operation between the Arab and the other National Societies, on the historical development of international humanitarian law, on the responsibility of the Red Crescent and Red Cross youth in the development of the National Societies, on health and social work, and on aid to Arab Societies affected by disasters.

A report was submitted by the President of the Palestinian Red Crescent, Dr. Fathi Arafat, asking the National Societies to support the Palestinian Red Crescent and requesting the ICRC and the League to take action with a view to protecting its medical establishments in the occupied territories.

The discussions ended with the adoption by the participants of 18 resolutions. After paying tribute to the ICRC for its dissemination efforts and inviting it to intensify its work for the protection of civilians in the occupied Arab territories and in Lebanon, the Conference adopted the above-mentioned ICRC proposals concerning the humanitarian gesture, ratification of the Protocols, and dissemination.

The ICRC and the League were also urged to ensure that the independence of the Lebanese Red Cross was maintained.

The Conference endorsed the proposal submitted by the President of the Jordan National Red Crescent Society for the creation of a Red Crescent Documentation Centre: research and staff training should also be included in the Centre's future activities.

The participating Societies expressed their unanimous regret at the absence of any mention of the Red Crescent in the name of the International Museum of the Red Cross, and asked the Secretary General of the League to continue his efforts to persuade the Museum's Board of Directors to bring the Museum's name into line with that of the Movement. They also asked the League to use Arabic more often in its publications.

The next Arab Conference will take place in Geneva in October 1989, just before the VIIth League General Assembly.

Mr. Jäckli, accompanied by Mr. Francis Junod, was received on 6 November by President Mubarak in the presence of the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs, Dr. Esmat Abdel Megid. Discussions essentially concerned the situation in Iran and Iraq, the Egyptian detainees in Iran and co-operation between the Egyptian Government and the ICRC.

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## **Pan-African Conference of National Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies** (Dakar, 21-23 November 1988)

The Pan-African Conference of National Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies took place in Dakar from 21 to 23 November 1988 under the chairmanship of the President of the Senegalese Red Cross, Mrs. Siga Seye Coulibaly. It was attended by representatives of 40 African and 12 other National Societies, of the League and of the ICRC.

The ICRC delegation was composed of Mr. Cornelio Sommaruga, President; Mr. Yves Sandoz, Director of the Department of Principles, Law and Relations with the Movement; Mr. Thierry Germond, responsible for the regional delegations in Africa; Mr. Friedrich Steinemann, as future regional delegate in Lagos; and Mrs. Marguerite Contat, regional delegate in Lomé.

At the opening session, on 21 November, H. E. Abdou Diouf, President of the Republic of Senegal, praised the role of the Red Cross and Red Crescent in the development of the African continent, and stressed their contribution to peace. He called for a humanitarian mobilization and for preservation of the non-political character of humanitarian action. The President of the League of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, Mr. Mario Villarroel, spoke of the League's role in promoting the activities of the National Societies, and Mr. Cornelio Sommaruga made a vigorous appeal to African States which are not yet party to the 1977 Protocols to ratify them without delay. League General Secretary, Mr. Pär Stenbäck, expressing his strong feelings on the issue of development, called for new measures to bridge the gap between rich and poor National Societies.