

THIRD PLENARY MEETING
COMMISSION REPORTS
AND ADOPTION OF RESOLUTIONS

(7 December 1995)

The third plenary meeting began with an account by the Rapporteurs of the work of the two Commissions. Professor José Manuel Carrilho Ribeiro, President of the Portuguese Red Cross, reported on the work of Commission I (see pp. 36-42 above) and Mr Jaime J. Yambao, Minister Counsellor, Permanent Mission of the Philippines, reported on the work of Commission II (see pp. 43-48 above).

After a summary by Ambassador Philippe Kirsch of the work of the Drafting Committee, **the Conference adopted by consensus the five resolutions submitted** (see pp. 58-77). The first three were concerned with the subjects examined in Commission I, whilst the other two related to those discussed in Commission II:

- Resolution 1* International humanitarian law: From law to action
Report on the follow-up to the International Conference on the Protection of War Victims;
- Resolution 2* Protection of the civilian population in period of armed conflict;
- Resolution 3* International humanitarian law applicable to armed conflicts at sea;
- Resolution 4* Principles and action in international humanitarian assistance and protection;
- Resolution 5* Strengthening national capacity to provide humanitarian development assistance and protection to the most vulnerable.

CLOSING SESSION

FINAL STATEMENTS

(7 December 1995)

The Conference ended in a warm and friendly atmosphere, underscored by the final statements delivered by Princess Margriet of the Netherlands as Chairwoman of the Standing Commission, the President of the ICRC, the President of the Federation and the Chairwoman of the Conference, Mrs Astrid Heiberg.

The **Chairwoman of the Standing Commission** paid tribute to the work of the outgoing Commission and especially its Chairman. She stressed that the new Commission would be dedicated to strengthening the Movement and preparing for the next International Conference of the Red Cross and Red Crescent, which would be held before the end of the century.

The **President of the ICRC** pointed out that, after an interval of far too many years, the 26th Conference had led to the resumption of a humanitarian dialogue showing that the Movement was full of vitality and could bear its humanitarian message into the dawn of the third millennium and far beyond. The present Conference had been crowned with success because it had been prepared well in advance and because it had been chaired with firm and elegant authority. Victims still looked to us, waiting all around for us to act on the pledges given here in this humanitarian covenant; its results would be assessed in 1999 at the 27th International Conference of the Red Cross and Red Crescent, which would have to be truly universal as regards both States and National Societies. Mr Sommaruga congratulated the members of the Standing Commission on their election and looked forward to working with them. He thanked the Chairwoman and Vice-Chairmen of the Conference; the Chairmen, Vice-Chairmen and Rapporteurs of the two Commissions; the Chairman of the Drafting Committee and the Secretary General of the Conference. He also thanked the Swiss government for its political, financial and logistical support, and expressed his gratitude to all the delegations, adding that the Conference was a unique and irreplaceable forum. Lastly, Mr Sommaruga stressed that every effort must be made to implement the resolutions which had just been adopted. "May the voice of humanity raised at this Conference never fall silent!"

The **President of the Federation** first of all expressed his gratitude to the Swiss Confederation and to all who had helped make the Conference a success. Then, in words of encouragement to the National Societies, he said that they stood at the start of a new journey. There would be no rest. "Let us form a humanitarian lobby. May the Federation and the ICRC act humbly and accept change. Together we will succeed!"

Finally, the **Chairwoman of the Conference** commented that through the participation of more than 350 delegations, both those representing governments, National Societies, the ICRC and the Federation and those present as observers, and as the approximately 200 statements made in the two Commissions had shown, the 26th Conference was a testimony to the relevance of humanitarian concerns. In reviewing the results of the Conference, Mrs Heiberg emphasized the unanimous condemnation of attacks directed against civilians, the recognition of rape as a war crime, the support for the minimum age of recruitment of children into the armed forces to be raised from 15 to 18 years, and the extensive endorsement of the recommendations of the Intergovernmental Group of Experts, particularly those concerning the dissemination of international humanitarian law and the prosecution of perpetrators of violations thereof. The principles proposed in Commission II for improved guidance of relief operations had received broad support, as had the need to help with National Society development.

She welcomed the progress made towards achieving a total ban on anti-personnel mines, and the new thrust given to the dialogue between governments and Red Cross/Red Crescent institutions.

In conclusion, Mrs Heiberg paid tribute to the members of the Conference Bureau and to Mr Kirsch and Mr Carlton, who had skilfully chaired the work of the Drafting Committee; Mr Kaspar Villiger, President of the Swiss Confederation; Mr Olivier Vodoz, President of the Geneva State Council; the ICRC and the Federation, joint organizers of the Conference; the Secretary General, Ambassador Jean-Daniel Biéler; and the Assistant Secretaries General, Mrs Yolande Camporini and Mr Olivier Dürr.
