

Council of Delegates

(Geneva, 1-2 December 1995)

Opening session

The Council of Delegates met on 1 and 2 December 1995 in Geneva and was attended by some 600 delegates (twice as many as in Birmingham in 1993) from the National Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, and representatives from the ICRC and the Federation.

The meeting was opened by Botho Prince of Sayn-Wittgenstein-Hohenstein, in his capacity as Chairman of the Standing Commission of the Red Cross and Red Crescent.

In his opening address he reiterated the Movement's basic mission: to assist the most vulnerable. He also stressed the vital necessity for solidarity and harmony within the Movement, while at the same time noting the Movement's moral right to ask States to support the work of the Red Cross and Red Crescent. The assembly then proceeded to elect the Council officials: Mr Cornelio Sommaruga, President of the ICRC, and Dr Mohammed M. Al-Hadid, President of the Jordan National Red Crescent Society and Vice-President of the Federation, were respectively elected by acclamation to the posts of Chairman and Vice-Chairman of the Council of Delegates. Ms Yolande Camporini, from the Federation, and Ms Kathleen Graf, from the ICRC, were elected as secretaries to the Council.

In his address, Mr Sommaruga welcomed the eight new National Societies recognized by the ICRC (Andorra, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Equatorial Guinea, Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan) and greeted the reunited Cambodian Red Cross Society. Pointing out that it was the 30th anniversary of the proclamation of the Fundamental Principles of the Red Cross and Red Crescent, he said that those principles were today a source of inspiration for

many humanitarian organizations in that they have chosen to adopt the Code of Conduct which the ICRC and Federation had suggested to them. He, too, stressed that the Movement's internal cohesion must be maintained and reminded the meeting that the Movement existed only to serve others — the common mission of its various components being to help the suffering and the destitute. Today's world, Mr Sommaruga emphasized, needed a strong Movement and one which was capable of conveying a forceful humanitarian message.

The agenda was adopted after several comments on the 26th International Conference, which was described as an opportunity to mobilize the international community in aid of all conflict victims and other vulnerable people and highlight the role of National Societies in encouraging appropriate measures within their respective countries.

A resolution tabled by several National Societies (Resolution 1) was adopted, appealing "to all participants in the International Conference, in the interest of all victims and vulnerable people, to safeguard its exclusively humanitarian character, in particular by respecting the Fundamental Principles during the Conference, in conformity with the Statutes of the Movement".

Report of the Commission on the Red Cross, Red Crescent and Peace

Mr Maurice Aubert, Chairman of the Commission on the Red Cross, Red Crescent and Peace, introduced the final report and its recommendations, some of a general nature and others relating more specifically to respect for children's rights, promotion of the Federation's manual entitled *Aids, Health and Human Rights*, and the question of minorities.

Mr Eric Roethlisberger, Vice-President of the ICRC, pointed to the Movement's responsibility in promoting peace and tolerance and the willingness of the ICRC to have the issue of arms transfers examined by a small study group that was representative of the Movement.

Lady Limerick, Vice-President of the Federation, voiced the Federation's belief that the Commission's work could be taken over by the components of the Movement, thereby confirming that the Commission was to be dissolved.

The delegates expressed their gratitude to the Commission and its Chairman and adopted a resolution which *inter alia* "requests the National

Societies, the ICRC and the International Federation, in cooperation with the Henry Dunant Institute, to pursue implementation of the 'Programme of Action of the Red Cross and Red Crescent as a Factor of Peace' and of the 'Fundamental Guidelines for the Contribution of the Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement to a True Peace in the World'. The resolution likewise calls upon all components of the Movement to work to prevent conflicts by strengthening mutual understanding, and to reaffirm the importance of safeguarding children's rights — especially the rights of those subjected to exploitation, ill-treatment or torture; it also stresses the need to adopt national measures to repress child prostitution. In addition, it voices the Council's desire that the Movement's role and attitude concerning the problem of arms transfers be studied and clarified.

In summing up, Mr Aubert pointed out that human rights and the prevention of conflicts were to peace what hygiene was to health. He concluded by stressing the importance of the worldwide network of National Societies in helping the most vulnerable (Resolution 2).

Future of the Movement

At its meeting in Birmingham in 1993, the Council of Delegates had adopted a resolution setting up a "Policy and Planning Advisory Commission" composed of twelve members — six from the National Societies, three from the Federation and three from the ICRC — to conduct a study on the future of the Movement. Mr Darrell Jones of the Canadian Red Cross Society, as Chairman of this Commission, presented its report to the Council of Delegates, drawing particular attention to the increased role which the Advisory Commission proposed giving to the Standing Commission, the prospects for functional cooperation between the various components of the Movement and questions concerning the emblem. (In this connection, the Commission suggested that the Standing Commission should consult government experts on all matters relating to the use of the emblem.)

The Council of Delegates unanimously approved the conclusions set forth in the Report and adopted a resolution extending the Standing Commission's terms of reference and strengthening its structure. In the same resolution it decided to re-establish, on a temporary basis, an independent Advisory Commission consisting of twelve members (three appointed by the ICRC, three by the Federation and six from National Societies). The Commission is mandated to keep the implementation of

the recommendations concerning the Standing Commission and the Council of Delegates under review; to identify areas in which the statutory provisions concerning the role, competences and functioning of the statutory bodies of the Movement might require clarification; to follow developments in the field of functional cooperation between the ICRC and the Federation; to put forward proposals for a common strategy for the components of the Movement; and to keep under review the external factors affecting the Movement (Resolution 3).

A further resolution adopted by the Council of Delegates invites the ICRC and the Federation to continue to build up their functional cooperation and to “develop, on the basis of operational experience and their report on functional cooperation, proposals for elements to be included in the new Agreement defining the organization of the international activities of the components of the Movement...” (Resolution 4).

Information policy of the Movement

The heads of the respective information services of the ICRC and the Federation, Mr Christian Kornevall and Mr Ian Piper, outlined the main points of the information policy of the Movement, which was approved in 1989 and now required updating. In presenting a plan of action, they described the priorities on which the ICRC and the Federation will concentrate in the years to come, including publications, the annual celebration of World Red Cross and Red Crescent Day, new communication technologies and the Movement’s relations with the media. They reminded delegates of the need to obtain the support and increased participation of the National Societies in information projects.

After discussing this agenda item, the Council of Delegates passed a resolution which, *inter alia*, “invites the ICRC and the International Federation to work skilfully with all National Societies to deliver clear and concise messages to the world, inspired by the Fundamental Principles of the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement”. In addition, the ICRC and the Federation were called upon “to convene a geographically representative forum of key communicators from National Societies and, with outside advisory assistance if necessary, to produce a set of coherent project plans to run from 1996 to the millennium”; this forum, when it met in 1996, could also discuss the question of informing National Societies about direct contacts by the ICRC and the Federation with news agencies regarding campaigns or appeals (Resolution 6).

Children in armed conflicts

The Council of Delegates adopted a resolution which, deploring the fact that children under the age of fifteen are used as soldiers in many parts of the world, in violation of international law “urges the ICRC, National Societies and the International Federation to work for improved implementation, at the national level, of existing legal standards and increased dissemination thereof”. Endorsing the Plan of Action for the Movement, which aims to promote the principle of non-participation and non-recruitment of children below the age of 18 years in armed conflicts and to take concrete action to protect and assist child victims of armed conflicts, the Council requested the ICRC and the Federation to report on progress in implementing the Plan of Action to the Council of Delegates in 1997 (Resolution 5).

Henry Dunant Institute

After hearing the reports by the Chairman of the General Assembly of the Institute, Mr George Weber, and the Acting Director of the Institute, Mr Jiri Toman, the Council congratulated the Institute upon its 30 years of activity and upon its research, training and documentation services. The delegates adopted a resolution in which the Council, whilst taking note of the fact that the ICRC, the Federation and many National Societies had set up their own information, research and training systems, invited the ICRC, the Federation and the Swiss Red Cross, as the co-founding bodies of the Institute, to examine and redefine, before the end of 1996, the role and functions of the Institute so as to devote its intellectual, financial and material resources to activities that serve to clarify and illuminate the policies and strategies that are common to the Movement. Furthermore, the Council invited National Societies to give full support to the redefinition and reinforcement of the Institute and requested the co-founding bodies to report on progress to the 1997 Council of Delegates (Resolution 8).

Report of the Commission for the Financing of the ICRC

The Council of Delegates renewed for two years the mandate of this Commission, which was founded on the initiative of five National Societies. It thus confirmed the mandate of the National Societies of Australia,

Colombia, Costa Rica, Finland, Germany, Japan, the Libyan Arab Jamahiriya, and Sierra Leone and appointed as new members the National Societies of the Republic of Korea, Hungary, Lebanon and Zimbabwe.

The Council of Delegates also requested the Commission, currently chaired by Mr Markku Niskala (Finland), to review its role and working methods and to decide, together with the ICRC, upon the most appropriate procedures (Resolution 7).

Armed protection of humanitarian assistance

The Council of Delegates adopted a resolution taking note of the report submitted by the ICRC and the Federation, reiterating the basic principle that the components of the Movement do not use armed protection and endorsing the guiding principles laid down in the report (humanity, independence, impartiality, neutrality), particularly the minimal criteria set out for the exceptional use of armed protection of humanitarian convoys (Resolution 9).

Anti-personnel landmines

After a very lively discussion, the Council of Delegates adopted a resolution in which, after expressing its great concern about the indiscriminate effects of anti-personnel landmines and the consequences for civilians and humanitarian action, it urged all components of the Movement to work for a total ban on anti-personnel landmines, encouraged all measures to alleviate the suffering of victims and to remove mines already in place, invited National Societies to intensify contacts with their governments in order to obtain a total ban on anti-personnel landmines and requested the ICRC and the Federation to report to the 1997 Council of Delegates on progress made (Resolution 10).

Miscellaneous

The ICRC and the Federation took due note of the dissemination and application of the Code of Conduct for the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement and Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) in Disaster Relief and the issue of refugees and displaced persons. Both

these matters were re-examined during the 26th International Conference and were the subject of resolutions (see pp. 69 *et seq.* and 60 *et seq.*).

Date and place of the next Council of Delegates

The Council of Delegates took note of the invitation by the Spanish Red Cross to host its next meeting in autumn 1997.

HENRY DUNANT MEDAL

During a ceremony which took place in Geneva on 2 December 1995, six people, three of them posthumously, were awarded the Henry Dunant Medal for the humanitarian services they had rendered. The recipients were:

- **Dr Hugo Ernesto Merino Grijalva**, former President of the Ecuadorean Red Cross;
- **Ms Jacqueline Briot**, of the French Red Cross;
- **Botho Prince of Sayn-Wittgenstein-Hohenstein**, Chairman of the Standing Commission of the Red Cross and Red Crescent;
- **Tunku Tan Sri Mohammed**, former Chairman of the Malaysian Red Crescent Society (posthumous award);
- **Professor Hans Haug**, former President of the Swiss Red Cross, former Vice-President of the International Federation and member of the International Committee of the Red Cross (posthumous award);
- **Dr Esmildo Gutierrez Sanchez**, former Secretary-General of the Cuban Red Cross (posthumous award).

These medals are awarded every two years to recognize and reward outstanding services and acts performed on behalf of the Movement. Criteria for receiving the award include incurring risks to help other people — risks which endanger life, health and personal freedom. These medals may also be awarded for a long period of service devoted to the Movement.

Since 1969, the Henry Dunant Medal has been awarded to 61 members of the Movement, including 16 on whom it was conferred posthumously.