

ICRC President visits Cuba

ICRC President Cornelio Sommaruga paid an official visit to Cuba in mid-April at the invitation of the Cuban Government.

President Sommaruga was able to discuss a number of international humanitarian issues during a two-hour meeting with the Cuban leader, Fidel Castro. He had similar talks with several members of the State Council and Government, and met with the President, Secretary General and staff of the Cuban Red Cross.

At a news conference held in Havana at the end of his three-day visit, Mr. Sommaruga announced that the ICRC had for the first time received permission to visit people detained for reasons of state security in Cuban prisons according to standard ICRC procedures.

He also stated that Cuba had agreed to become party to Protocol II additional to the Geneva Conventions which covers the protection of victims of non-international armed conflicts. Cuba became party to Protocol I, relating to the protection of victims of international armed conflicts, in 1982.

Government officials, and particularly the Cuban President, all expressed their gratitude for the ICRC's visits to two Cuban pilots captured in Angola earlier in the year, and for its assistance over the past ten years to a Cuban soldier held in Somalia.

The dissemination of international humanitarian law in Cuba was also discussed.
