

Council of Delegates

(Geneva, 26-27 October 1989)

The Council of Delegates of the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement, which brings together representatives of the National Societies, the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) and the League of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, met on 26 and 27 October 1989 in Geneva.

The meeting was opened by Dr. Ahmed Abu-Goura, Chairman of the Movement's Standing Commission, who called on all present to establish peace in the world and build it in the minds of people.

His proposal for the election of Mr. Cornelio Sommaruga, President of the ICRC, as Chairman of the Council and Mr. Mario Villarroel, President of the League, as its Vice-Chairman was unanimously adopted.

In his opening address, Mr. Sommaruga described the challenges facing the Movement and the commitments of the ICRC. He concluded by expressing his hope that a spirit of brotherhood, mutual trust and determination would guide the Council's work.

The first part of the session on 26 October was devoted to presentation of the Henry Dunant Medal to six members of the Movement and the first award of the Red Cross and Red Crescent Prize for Peace and Humanity, which went to the Lebanese Red Cross.

The Council also adopted an appeal proposed by Dr. Mouloud Belaouane, President of the Algerian Red Crescent, and calling for the immediate and unconditional release of Emanuel Christen and Elio Erriquez, the two ICRC orthopaedic technicians abducted in Sidon, Lebanon, on 6 October 1989.

An account of the two awards and the appeal was given in the previous issue of the *Review* (No. 273, November-December 1989, pp. 578-579).

The Council met again on 27 October to discuss several subjects of interest to the Movement. It adopted a series of resolutions which were published in the previous issue of the *Review* (See pp. 580-585).

- **Commission on the Red Cross, Red Crescent and Peace**

Mr. Alexandre Hay, the commission's Chairman, presented a report covering the "Seminar on Information and Dissemination of International Humanitarian Law as a Contribution to Peace", held in Leningrad on 10-14 October 1988 (see the *IRRC*, No. 267, p. 531), the "World Campaign for the Protection of War Victims", the "Final Report of the Group of Experts on Human Rights", and lastly the Commission's future.

- **World Campaign for the Protection of War Victims**

This Campaign is part of the information policy proposed to the Council of Delegates by the ICRC and the League. Its objectives are to alert public opinion and governments throughout the world to the distress of war victims and thereby avoid new conflicts as far as possible, to give practical help to today's victims and to improve long-term assistance.

The Campaign, the first of its kind to be launched on such an overall scale, is intended to bring about a worldwide humanitarian mobilization and thus reinforce the Movement's efforts to protect war victims and promote peace. It will culminate in an extensive media event on World Red Cross and Red Crescent Day (8 May) in 1991.

Such a mobilization will require the active participation of the entire Movement. In addition to their usual activities, the 149 National Societies should plan to take part in it to the extent of their capabilities.

Though the Campaign is being organized by the Movement, other governmental and non-governmental organizations will be asked for their support.

The Campaign's main target audience will be the general public, both in conflict and non-conflict areas, but methods will differ depending on local conditions. Its programme will have to be innovative, interesting to the media, and ensure that the long-term impact of dissemination work is increased.

The Campaign programme presented by Ms. Christina Magnuson, Vice-Chairman of the Swedish Red Cross and Chairman of the Campaign's Steering Committee, and illustrated by a video film, gave rise to lively discussion. The Council of Delegates then adopted both the Campaign's general objectives and its preliminary programme and called on the National Societies, the ICRC and the League to take active part in its implementation.

- **Respect for human rights**

The Council of Delegates adopted the final report of the Group of Experts on Human Rights which had previously been adopted by the Commission on the Red Cross, Red Crescent and Peace. The report, which was presented by Mr. Yves Sandoz, Director of the ICRC's Department of Principles, Law and Relations with the Movement, describes the wide range of activities by which the Movement is making a significant contribution to respect for human rights, including active contributions in particular to five rights mentioned in the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights. These rights clearly exemplify the Movement's humanitarian dedication on behalf of the weak, and the victims, both in time of conflict and in natural disasters: the right of the family to the widest possible protection, the right to an adequate standard of living, the right to health, the right to education and the right to take part in cultural life and to enjoy the benefits of scientific progress.

The Report is an invaluable means of making the Movement and its commitment to the cause of human rights more widely known, the Movement's very diversity reflecting the specificity of its various components.

The Report contains a series of recommendations concerning spheres of activity in which the Movement, without prejudice to its Fundamental Principles and without overstepping its fundamental mission, can and should commit itself with greater energy and determination in support of human rights, while respecting the specific nature of each of its components. It ends by urging the Movement as a whole to step up its activities in four specific fields: in the fight against torture, forced or involuntary disappearances and racial discrimination, and in the protection of children's rights.

The Council called on the National Societies, the ICRC and the League to implement the Report's conclusions and recommendations.

- **The Commission's future**

The Council of Delegates decided to renew the mandate of the Commission in its present composition until its next session, asking it to complete its work on a four-year plan for the Programme of Action of the Red Cross as a Factor of Peace and on reactivation of the Plan of Red Cross and Red Crescent Action in the Struggle Against Racism and Racial Discrimination.

● The Movement's Information Policy

Ms. Michèle Mercier, Acting Head of the ICRC's Communication Department, and Mr. George Reid, Director of the League's Public Affairs Department, jointly presented a report on the Movement's information policy. The report was illustrated by a video.

This information policy is essentially a practical programme to enhance the Movement's ability to communicate a clear and consistent message at the international level.

After extensive research and consultation with the National Societies, the policy is based on an *Identity Statement* firmly rooted in the Statutes and Principles of the Movement and explaining, in simple language, what the Movement is, what it does and why it does it.

The Statement's text is as follows:

THE STATEMENT

The International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement is dedicated to protecting human life and dignity worldwide, thereby promoting lasting peace.

The 250 million people of the Movement help those hurt by armed conflict, natural disasters and other human tragedies. Victims around the world have come to trust the people of the Movement to be there to provide essential humanitarian services.

The people of the Movement help anyone in urgent need. No regard is paid to political, racial, religious or ideological differences. No point of view or person is favoured over another. Neither influence nor pressure will ever alter these facts.

Red Cross and Red Crescent members protect life and alleviate suffering through the International Committee of the Red Cross, the League of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, and 149 National Societies, each organization having a specific mandate and field of action. Together, these organizations form a lasting and evolving Movement, grounded in humanitarian principles and recognized by international law and custom. This unique network has spanned generations, linking people around the world who share a commitment to prevent and ease suffering and a readiness to protect human life and dignity—no matter whose, no matter where, no matter when.

But the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement is more than a philosophy, a treaty or an historical institution. It is the embodiment of a worldwide belief that human life and dignity are worthy of respect and of protection from the ravages of man and nature.

It is a belief that is made real every day by the actions of skilled and trained people who are motivated by a deep personal desire to help others without regard for their own material gain.

Through its constituent organizations, members of the Movement come to the aid of people caught in the violence of armed conflict and other emergencies by providing supplies to sustain life, visiting prisoners of war and other detainees, helping people communicate with loved ones, and reuniting families.

Red Cross and Red Crescent members help people prepare for, recover from and, if possible, prevent the effects of hurricanes, floods, fires, drought, or other disasters that threaten individuals and communities.

They help people prevent and handle emergencies through social service programmes and by teaching life-saving and health skills. Where needed and possible, they save millions of lives by providing a reliable supply of blood.

And they share resources, so developing such services throughout the whole Movement.

The financial support of individuals, corporations and governments make this work possible.

The International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement: Protecting Human Life and Dignity Worldwide

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The policy also recognizes the need to assist information staff in developing National Societies and outlines practical steps to do so.

Finally, provision is made for the basic financing and staffing of the policy to be covered by the existing budgets of the ICRC and the League and by certain National Societies.

● Universal Exposition in Seville

After the showing of a video film on preparations for the Universal exposition (EXPO 92) in Seville, Mr. Pär Stenbäck, League Secretary General, M. Maurice Aubert, ICRC Vice-President, and Mr. Leocadio Marín, President of the Spanish Red Cross, spoke in turns about this event which, over a period of some six months, should enable millions of visitors to be informed about the Movement's humanitarian work.

The Council of Delegates reaffirmed that the Movement will participate in EXPO 92 and decided, among other things, that the Spanish Red Cross would be the legal representative of the ICRC and the League vis-à-vis the Exposition's organizers, that the President of the Spanish Red Cross would be General Commissioner of the Red Cross and Red Crescent pavilion and that the Spanish Red Cross would be entrusted with fund-raising for the pavilion, in conformity with existing regulations and principles.

Finally, under the terms of an agreement between the Presidents of the ICRC, the League and the Spanish Red Cross and in accordance with the resolution adopted on the information policy, all matters relating to the sponsoring and to the construction and content of the pavilion will be studied by the group assigned to implement the Movement's information and sponsorship programmes.

- **Use of the emblem**

At its 1987 meeting in Rio de Janeiro, the Council of Delegates decided to submit the revised *Regulations on the Use of the Emblem by the National Societies*, drafted by the ICRC in consultation with the National Societies and the League Secretariat, to the next International Conference of the Red Cross and Red Crescent for formal adoption.

At the suggestion of several National Societies which have had new experience in the use of the emblem, for example in fund-raising, the Council invited "the ICRC, in consultation with the League, to study the questions raised by the implementation of certain rules and, to this end, to form a working group with representatives of the League and of National Societies from the various parts of the world...". The ICRC will report to the next Council of Delegates before the draft revision of the Regulations is presented to the next International Conference.

- **Respect for and dissemination of the Fundamental Principles of the Red Cross and Red Crescent**

An interim report on respect for and dissemination of the Fundamental Principles was presented by Mr. Pierre Keller, a member of the ICRC's Executive Board.

The report contained the views of the ICRC and of leading members of the Movement. They recognized that the Fundamental Principles constitute the "cornerstone" of the Movement's components in all circumstances. There was for the present no need to alter the Principles as they stand in the Movement's current Statutes, but it was important to ensure that their meaning was better understood, adapting the

methods for their dissemination to the specific conditions of each country. To this end, the experts had studied various matters relating to the Principles and identified others which deserve further attention in order to make the Principles more widely known and better understood.

The Council of Delegates, reaffirming the importance of respect for the Fundamental Principles by the Movement's components and the need to promote knowledge of the Principles among the general public as well, asked the ICRC to continue the study in consultation with all the National Societies, the League and the Henry Dunant Institute. It further asked the Movement's components to collect any material they consider useful for promoting a wider knowledge and understanding of the Principles and to forward it to the ICRC.

- **Events to mark the Movement's 125th Anniversary**

The Council of Delegates took note of a report presented by Mr. Maurice Aubert on the various events held to mark the 125th anniversary. The report on *Supercamp 89*, a particularly appreciated event in which over 500 young people from 132 countries took part, was presented by Mr. Pär Stenbäck.

- **Activities of the Henry Dunant Institute**

Finally, the Council took note of the report on the activities of the Henry Dunant Institute presented by His Honour Darrell D. Jones on behalf of Mr. Mario Villarroel, the Institute's Chairman.

The next meeting of the Council of Delegates will be held at the same time and place as the next League General Assembly.
