

# ***INTERNATIONAL COMMITTEE OF THE RED CROSS***

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## **Missions by the President**

In January and February 1990 the President of the ICRC, Mr. Cornelio Sommaruga, carried out missions to the Netherlands, Belgium and Mexico.

### **● In the Netherlands**

The President of the ICRC, accompanied by Mr. Michel Convers, Head of the Operational Support Department, and Mr. Jean-Luc Blondel, Acting Head of the Division for Principles and Relations with the Movement, visited members of the Netherlands government and the National Red Cross from 22 to 24 January 1990.

Mr. Sommaruga was received by the Minister for Foreign Affairs, Mr. Hans van den Broek, and the Minister for Development Co-operation, Mr. J. P. Pronk, to whom he conveyed the ICRC's deep gratitude for the steady and substantial support it receives from the Netherlands.

The ICRC's operational activities worldwide, the ratification of the Protocols additional to the Geneva Conventions and the Twenty-Sixth International Conference of the Red Cross and Red Crescent were the main topics discussed by the ICRC delegation with the two Ministers and with the regional directors of the Ministry for Foreign Affairs and the Commissions concerned in both Chambers of Parliament.

The President of the ICRC was also received by H.M. Queen Beatrix of the Netherlands and by the Prime Minister, Mr. Rudolph Lubbers.

In meetings with the Netherlands Red Cross, the ICRC delegation continued discussions, begun several years earlier, on the distribution within the Movement of responsibilities during international relief operations. During his visit, the President of the ICRC was given the National Society's highest award.

At the University of Leiden Mr. Sommaruga gave a speech in which he voiced the ICRC's major concerns and appealed to all governments, members of the Movement and the public for a heightened awareness of humanitarian issues.

## ● In Belgium

The President of the ICRC, accompanied by Mr. Michel Convers, visited Belgium on 6 February 1990. He was granted an audience by H.M. King Baudouin, with whom he exchanged views on topics of mutual concern. Mr. Sommaruga and Mr. Convers also attended a working meeting with several high officials from the Ministry for Foreign Affairs and subsequently met the Prime Minister, Dr. Wilfried Martens, the Minister for Foreign Affairs, the Defence Minister and the Private Secretary to the Minister for Co-operation and Development.

Discussions with the authorities focused on Belgium's contribution to ICRC activities and the next International Conference of the Red Cross and Red Crescent. In addition, the ICRC delegation gave a general account of the institution's current activities.

Mr. Sommaruga and Mr. Convers were also received by H.R.H. Prince Albert of Belgium, President of the Belgian Red Cross, and by senior members of the National Society, with whom they discussed the ICRC's activities and relations within the Movement.

## ● In Mexico

From 19 to 23 February 1990 President Sommaruga paid an official visit to Mexico, where he had been invited by the Mexican Red Cross to attend a ceremony celebrating the 80th anniversary of its foundation. He was accompanied by the Delegate General, Mr. Jean-Marc Bornet, and the Regional Delegate, Mr. Roland Desmeules.

The main purpose of the visit was to discuss with the Mexican authorities the ICRC's activities in Central America, the dissemination of international humanitarian law in Mexico and the country's accession to Protocol II.

Mr. Sommaruga had talks with the President of Mexico, Mr. Carlos Salinas de Gortari, the Minister for Foreign Affairs and the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, for whom he outlined the role and activities of ICRC regional delegations.

In a speech delivered at the Diplomatic Academy of Mexico, Mr. Sommaruga stressed the importance of ratification of Protocol II by all Latin American countries that had not yet done so.

The official ceremony marking the 80th anniversary of the foundation of the Mexican Red Cross took place on 21 February 1990 and was attended by the Mexican Head of State and his wife, the diplomatic corps and several government representatives. The speeches given by the President of the Republic, the President of the National

Society and the President of the ICRC highlighted the open attitude of the Red Cross towards young people, the important part played by volunteers, and the health care and training activities of the Mexican Red Cross.

The President of the ICRC was also invited to attend a meeting of the National Council of the Mexican Red Cross, which adopted a resolution in support of ICRC activities, particularly in Mexico. At the end of the meeting Mr. Sommaruga was presented with the National Society's highest award.

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