

TOWARDS A HUMANITARIAN MOBILIZATION

ICRC President visits Africa

Mr. Cornelio Sommaruga, President of the ICRC, travelled to Namibia, Kenya, Uganda and Zaire from 19 to 30 March 1990.

In his speeches, talks with heads of State and government representatives and meetings with National Society leaders, diplomats, academics and journalists, the ICRC President stressed the need for a humanitarian mobilization within the international community. He laid special emphasis on the following points:

- The ICRC spends half its field budget for its work in Africa. This major commitment corresponds to the needs resulting from the many armed conflicts and internal disturbances on the continent. The ICRC intends to continue its activities to help the civilian population, who are the main victims of these conflicts, and will adapt its emergency assistance wherever possible to ensure that the beneficiaries rapidly become self-sufficient.
- The ICRC will seek to ensure that the donor countries do not reduce their humanitarian aid to Africa in order to channel more funds into other regions of the world.
- The ICRC calls upon African States not to make the settlement of international or internal disputes a precondition for emergency humanitarian aid. Such aid must be given absolute priority.
- Concerned by the frequent misuse of the Red Cross and Red Crescent emblem, the ICRC appeals to States to do everything necessary to stop such abuse.

Finally, the ICRC President urgently appealed for the immediate, unconditional release of Elio Erriquez and Emanuel Christen, the two ICRC delegates held in hostage in Lebanon.

- **Namibia**

At the invitation of Mr. Sam Nuyoma, the newly elected President of the Republic of Namibia, President Sommaruga visited Namibia from 19 to 22 March to take part in the country's independence celebrations.

Accompanied by the heads of the ICRC delegations in the Republic of South Africa and Namibia, Mr. Sommaruga attended the ceremony at which the Namibian flag was raised and Mr. Nujoma was sworn in as President.

Together with League Secretary General Mr. Pär Stenbäck and Mr. Klaus Eriksen, President of the emergent Namibian Red Cross Society, Mr. Sommaruga was received by the Namibian Minister of Health. Their talks largely centred on the conditions for recognition of the new National Society and the assistance that the Geneva-based institutions could give.

During his stay, Mr. Sommaruga had talks with several eminent people attending Namibia's independence ceremonies. ICRC assistance to Angola and the question of visits to detainees there were the main subject of talks between the ICRC President and Mr. José Eduardo dos Santos, President of the People's Republic of Angola. Mr. Sommaruga also met South African Foreign Minister Mr. Pik Botha and several leading officials from his ministry to discuss allowing the ICRC to visit penal-law prisoners convicted of "unrest-related" offences. Finally, the ICRC President met Mr. Yasser Arafat, Chairman of the Palestine Liberation Organization, to discuss matters of humanitarian concern in the Middle East.

- **Kenya**

Mr. Sommaruga was received on 23 March by Mr. Daniel Arap Moi, President of Kenya, together with Mr. Ndolo Ayah, Minister of Foreign Affairs and International Co-operation, and Mr. Bethuel Kiplagat, Permanent Secretary at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Co-operation. Mr. Sommaruga was accompanied by leading members of the Kenya Red Cross, as well as the ICRC's Delegate General for Africa and the regional delegate based in Nairobi. The talks centred on the ICRC's operation in southern Sudan. The same day, President Sommaruga had talks with Mr. Mwai Kibaki, Minister of Health, on the future of the ICRC hospital in Lokichokio. Mr. Sommaruga then visited the Kenya Red Cross Society headquarters and announced an ICRC contribution to promote the development of the Turkana branch.

At a press conference, Mr. Sommaruga denounced misuse of the emblem in southern Sudan and again appealed for the release of the ICRC's two delegates being held hostage in Lebanon. At a subsequent meeting with representatives of the international press, he called for a humanitarian mobilization and described the ICRC's role in Africa, with particular emphasis on its independence, neutrality and impartiality.

- **Uganda**

Mr. Sommaruga, accompanied by the Delegate General for Africa and the head of the ICRC delegation in Kampala, was received by Mr. Yoweri Kaguta Museveni, President of the Republic of Uganda, on 27 March. With President Museveni were Mr. Ibrahim Mukiibi, Minister of Internal Affairs, Mr. Zak Kaberu, Minister of Health, Mr. Omara Atubo, Minister of State for Foreign Affairs, and Mr. Eriya Kategaya, First Deputy Prime Minister.

President Museveni and Mr. Sommaruga reviewed at length the situation in Africa and in Uganda in particular. They also addressed the question of ICRC access to all districts throughout the country in order to continue visits to detainees, and discussed Uganda's ratification of the Additional Protocols, which is under consideration by the Ministry of Justice.

Mr. Sommaruga also met leading officials of the Uganda Red Cross Society and discussed co-operation between the two institutions. In a moving ceremony he presented the Henry Dunant Medal, awarded posthumously by the Standing Commission during the 1989 Council of Delegates, to the parents of Mr. Michael Egabu who was killed near Soroti on 9 January 1989, and spoke words of tribute to the families of two other ICRC staff members who were killed in an ambush near Luwero in November 1983.

Finally, President Sommaruga gave a lecture at Makerere University in Kampala and took part in a televised round-table discussion about the ICRC.

- **Zaire**

On 28 March Mr. Sommaruga had talks in Kinshasa with Mr. Mwando Nsimba, acting Prime Minister and Deputy First State Commissioner, Mr. Kamanda wa Kamanda, Chairman of the Judiciary Council, and Mr. Nimy Mayidiki Ngimbi, State Commissioner for Citizens' Rights and Liberties. Mr. Sommaruga spoke to them of the

ICRC's concern about the conflicts in neighbouring countries, before broaching the question of visits and assistance to detainees.

Accompanied by the Delegate General for Africa and the present and future heads of the ICRC regional delegation in Kinshasa, Mr. Sommaruga then went to Lumbumbashi, capital of the Shaba Region. He was received there on 29 March by Mr. Mobutu Sese Seko, President of the Republic of Zaire, together with Mr. Mokondo Bonza, Head of the President's Office, and Mr. Nkema Liloo, Head of Security Affairs in the President's Office. During their discussion, Mr. Sommaruga described the ICRC's activities in Angola and Sudan and asked President Mobutu for support. President Mobutu confirmed his country's willingness to further increase its co-operation with the ICRC for its visits and assistance to security detainees.

Mr. Sommaruga also gave a lecture at the University of Kinshasa and took part in a televised round-table discussion about the ICRC.

The ICRC delegation was furthermore received by representatives of the Red Cross Society of the Republic of Zaire, with whom they discussed the Society's statutes and activities.
