

## Second World Red Cross and Red Crescent Conference on Peace

*In compliance with Decision I of the Council of Delegates in October 1983, the Second World Red Cross and Red Crescent Conference on Peace met at Aaland, Finland, and Stockholm, Sweden, from 2 to 7 September 1984 at the invitation of the National Red Cross Societies of Finland and Sweden, in extraordinary session of the Council of Delegates.*

*The First World Red Cross Conference on Peace (Belgrade, 11-13 June 1975) had adopted a "Programme of Action of the Red Cross as a Factor of Peace" which was formally approved by the Council of Delegates at the Twenty-third International Red Cross Conference (Bucharest, 1977).*

*The Council of Delegates of October 1983 decided that the objectives of the Second Conference should be to examine, assess, further develop and demonstrate the Red Cross contribution to peace. Basing itself on the experience of the Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement in implementing the Programme of Action of the Red Cross as a Factor of Peace, it was to endeavour to envisage the conduct and future activities of the Red Cross for peace and to establish for future use fundamental guidelines for the contribution of the Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement to a true peace in the world.*

*The Council of Delegates carefully defined the spirit in which the Second Conference on Peace should work, as follows: "For a constructive action on its part, within its sphere of competence, the Red Cross does not view peace simply as the absence of war. It intends to take part in the efforts made to preserve and organize a true peace, that is a dynamic process of co-operation among all States and peoples; co-operation founded on freedom, independence, national sovereignty, equality, respect of human rights, as well as a fair and equitable distribution of resources to meet the needs of peoples".*

*The Council of Delegates also stressed “the necessity to preserve the unity of the movement and to respect all of its principles, in particular that of neutrality”, and stated that “In view of its object, the Conference shall adopt its decisions by consensus”.*

## **First meeting of the Bureau**

In accordance with the Rules of Procedure of the Conference, the Bureau of the Conference held its first meeting on 1 September.

After electing as its Chairman Mr. Harald Huber, Chairman of the Commission on the Red Cross and Peace, it reviewed all matters relating to the programme and functioning of the Conference.

## **Opening session**

The Conference opened on 2 September on Aaland Island, Finland, the chair being taken by Mr. Harald Huber, former Vice-President of the ICRC and currently Chairman of the Commission on the Red Cross and Peace. It took place in the building of the provincial Parliament of Aaland and was attended by some 300 delegates representing 102 National Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, the ICRC and the League.

The opening ceremony began with a speech <sup>1</sup> by Dr. Ahmed Abu-Goura, Chairman of the Standing Commission of the International Red Cross, who said that conflicts did not spare our unhappy world; its peoples, especially innocent and defenceless civilians, women, children and the elderly, suffered cruelly from them. War was man-made; it was not nature's doing, but an inhuman act that tore humanity apart and was an expression of utmost egoism. Human nature had not changed but the world man lived in had evolved. Mankind was still seeking a guide and a path to follow. Like the major religions, the Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement also strove to contribute to world peace, which Dr. Abu-Goura described as “a dynamic process of co-operation among all States and peoples”.

He then spoke of the frantic arms race and the development of the International Red Cross and international humanitarian law, ending

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<sup>1</sup> We give here only very summary extracts from the speeches at the Conference. Their official and exact text will appear in the *Report* on the Conference to be published later.

with the fundamental question: What do we expect from this Conference, from the participants and non participants? What, he asked, is requested from the National Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies? If we truly want peace we must make clear the difference between the opposite concepts of good and evil, war and peace, satisfaction and privation, plenty and hunger. We must be the example for good conduct. Our efforts must help to protect the peoples of the world from war. We must work out essential guidelines for our noble quest for peace and for bringing social justice for the world.

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The Chairman of the Finnish Red Cross, Dr. Kauko Sipponen, brought out in his speech the role that the Red Cross can play in a troubled world and in the face of new challenges to promote the cause of peace. Mr. Sipponen recalled the First World Red Cross Conference on Peace held in Belgrade in 1975, and stressed that when the delegations returned from Belgrade they had learned that peace is not a gift and that we cannot keep it unless we continuously work for it and strive for the elimination of the causes of war. He added that the Red Cross shares the deep concern of the rest of the world in regard to overarmament and an eventual nuclear holocaust, and insisted that the Red Cross Movement needed to find a positive common strategy based on its experience and action. Realism has always been one of the greatest strengths of the Red Cross. We should not overestimate our importance—alone we cannot change the world. But we must not be too modest either. We are better equipped for concrete peace work, he said, than hardly any other single organization. We have the confidence of the Governments. We have not only a right, but a duty to raise our voice in the international debate.

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Mr. Kai Warras, Secretary General of the Finnish Red Cross, then read out a message from Dr. Mauno Koivisto, President of the Republic of Finland, which said:

Now, more than ever before in the history of mankind, peace is indivisible. Today the very survival of humanity, and not only its well-being and prosperity, is dependent upon the preservation of peace. Therefore, all efforts and endeavours towards this cherished objective are to be warmly welcomed.

Throughout its history the International Red Cross has rendered outstanding services to the cause of peace, and has done much to alleviate

human suffering during those unfortunate occasions when peace and tranquillity have had to yield to force and violence.

Keeping in mind these fundamental aspirations and objectives I wish to convey my sincere and deeply-felt wishes for the success of the Second World Red Cross and Red Crescent Conference on Peace. May your deliberations promote peace and security as well as better relations and friendship between states and peoples throughout the world.

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Judge Sune Carlsson, speaker of the Provincial Parliament of Aaland, then addressed the assembly, and in his message of welcome expressed the hope that the work of the Conference would cause the peoples and nations of the world, and their leaders, to realize more and more that international conflicts need not necessarily be settled by acts of war. He pointed out that at one time the Aaland Islands had been a source of tension between the Nordic countries but that thanks to the international arbitration of the League of Nations in 1921 they were now the symbol of peaceful settlement of disputes. He then expressed the hope that the demilitarized, peaceful setting of Aaland would have a favourable effect on the atmosphere of the Conference and that its result be a step forward towards permanent peace.

### **First plenary session**

The first plenary session took place on 3 September, Dr Kauko Sipponen, Chairman of the Finnish Red Cross, taking the chair. After a roll-call of the National Societies' delegations the assembly accepted by consensus the proposals submitted by the Conference Bureau for the election of the Drafting Committee, the Rapporteurs of the plenary sessions, and Rapporteurs of the Commissions.

The assembly greeted with acclamation the announcement that the Bureau had by consensus elected Mr Harald Huber, Chairman of the Commission on the Red Cross and Peace, as its Chairman; by so doing the assembly also elected him Chairman of the Conference.

Mr Alexandre Hay, President of the ICRC, then addressed the meeting. His speech was warmly applauded. Its text will be found a few pages farther on in this Review.

Mr Harald Huber, in his capacity as Chairman of the Commission on the Red Cross and Peace, then presented an introductory report on the implementation of the Programme of Action of the Red Cross as a

Factor of Peace. Using as a basis the replies received from 34 National Societies, 50 youth sections, the League, the ICRC and the Henry Dunant Institute, the Commission drew up an inventory of Red Cross achievements in the realms of assistance (mainly relief, development, health and youth) and protection (the development and dissemination of humanitarian law, aid to victims of conflicts, and direct contribution to peace). Mr Huber ended by quoting the conclusion of the Commission's report, namely that the Red Cross had its principles, its responsibilities were clear and its strategy was taking shape. It had yet to be proved that those principles and that strategy were applicable and effective.

The rest of the day was occupied by speeches from the delegates of 38 National Societies, many of whom stressed that the world situation was extremely grave and urged the Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement to use its moral authority in the efforts to halt the arms race, especially in nuclear weapons.

Many of the delegates were strongly in favour of intensifying Red Cross action for the dissemination of international humanitarian law. Many speakers wanted governments to be approached to prevent violations of humanitarian law, and its principles to be made better known to the public. Some delegates also proposed that the ICRC's powers as mediator should be strengthened, so as to prevent or end conflicts.

A number of delegates expressed the hope that the Conference would give the Movement a strong impetus by defining new tasks that would intensify and develop its activities in this field. Some delegates called for a direct contribution to peace through active participation in governmental and non-governmental peace movements, launching information campaigns that would include the mass media, and developing peace education for young people.

Other speakers were on the contrary opposed to a more specific role than that defined in Belgrade, fearing that the Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement would become involved in politics. The difficult task of solving the world's complicated strategic problems was, they said, the responsibility of other organizations; the Movement's true contribution to peace was its help to people in need, which was a daily reaffirmation of the value of human life.

At the first plenary session the Chairman of the Finnish Red Cross informed the assembly of the messages received from six governments (those of the German Democratic Republic, Hungary, Bulgaria, Poland, Czechoslovakia and the USSR) wishing the Conference success.

## Meetings of the Commissions

The two days 4 and 5 September were occupied by the meetings of the Commissions, whose proceedings consisted in a wide-ranging exchange of views on the implementation given to the Programme of Action and discussion, on this basis, of future Red Cross action for peace.

Commission I, dealing with peacetime activities, was chaired by Mr E. de la Mata Gorostizaga, President of the League; 92 National Societies, plus representatives of the ICRC, the League and the Henry Dunant Institute, took part in its discussions. Its Rapporteur was Mr Mohammed Neshnash of the Moroccan Red Crescent. National Societies reported to the Commission on the following subjects viewed as contributions to peace:

- Relief, by the Mauritanian Red Crescent and the Senegalese Red Cross;
- Health, by the Philippine National Red Cross;
- Youth, by the Canadian Red Cross;
- Development, by the Red Cross of Yugoslavia;
- Organizing and co-ordinating Red Cross work for peace, by the Red Cross of Zaire.

The Commission then took cognizance of the following working documents submitted by delegates of National Societies:

- Awareness of ecology;
- Peace education;
- Red Cross and the International Year of Peace, 1986, declared by the United Nations.

Commission II was concerned with Red Cross work in situations of armed conflicts. It was chaired by Mr Alexandre Hay, President of the ICRC; 73 National Societies, the ICRC, the League and the Henry Dunant Institute attended the sessions. Its Rapporteur was Mr V. T. Nathan of the Malaysian Red Crescent Society. It discussed the following subjects:

- Knowledge and dissemination of international humanitarian law, presented by the Australian Red Cross;
- Development of international humanitarian law, presented by the Indonesian Red Cross;
- Red Cross activities for relieving the suffering of war victims, presented by the Egyptian Red Crescent;

- Direct Red Cross contribution to peace, including disarmament, presented by the German Red Cross in the German Democratic Republic;
- Organization and co-ordination of the work of the Red Cross institutions for peace, presented by the French Red Cross.

All the above introductory statements were followed in both Commissions by penetrating and highly interesting discussion. Speakers were particularly concerned with the plight of children in armed conflicts, and with reuniting dispersed families.

## **Second plenary session**

The second plenary session of the Conference, on 6 September, was chaired by Mr B. Wallberg, Chairman of the Swedish Red Cross.

The Chairman read out a message to the Conference from the Government of Bulgaria before giving the floor to Mr Enrique de la Mata Gorostizaga, President of the League.

Mr de la Mata spoke of the impetus given by the First World Red Cross Conference on Peace (Belgrade, 1975), and thanked all those who had made the success of the Second Conference possible. He then reviewed the activities of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies all over the world, emphasizing their impact and variety, and paid tribute to the 250 million volunteers who were, he said, the real keystone of the Red Cross.

Referring to the matters dealt with by the Conference, he expressed his own opposition to the arms race, and added that what he wanted was that our society shall be morally strengthened; if we respect the individual we shall find peaceful solutions for all disputes and shall not resort to force. He called for concord and unity so that stockpiles of weapons should be rendered useless forevermore.

Urging the Conference to take young people's opinions into account, he asked whether the younger generation will accept the world we are building, saying that we must listen to know what they want. He said also that the Conference must be regarded as a source of inspiration for the future work of the Red Cross.

The plenary session then took cognizance of the proceedings of the two Commissions as presented by their Rapporteurs. Both Commissions' reports were adopted by consensus.

Mr Soehanda Ijas of the Indonesian Red Cross, Chairman of the Drafting Committee, then submitted to the assembly the draft Fundamental Guidelines for the Red Cross and Red Crescent contribution to peace. This document sets forth the Movement's contribution to a true peace and is intended to encourage and guide its members' work for peace. It states: "The National Societies, the ICRC and the League are slowly but steadily building for peace by their work. Through consistent, patient and all-encompassing effort each component of the Movement contributes to this dynamic process of co-operation which is to build such future for humanity to which we all aspire. Whereas war is most often the consequence of a long process of increasing tension, the Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement contributes to reducing tensions and defusing the causes of conflicts. In this way it works constantly—within the limits of its competence—for true peace. This long-term action is guaranteed by respect for the Fundamental Principles, which are an inspiration and a guide for all the Movement's humanitarian activities and which give it its unity, its strength, its orientation and its staying power." By following these guidelines the Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement hoped to inspire all the peoples and governments of the world, so helping to find the paths that will lead mankind to a lasting peace.

The Fundamental Guidelines were adopted by consensus. Their full text will be found farther on in this Review.

The Conference then adopted a message to the international community exhorting all governments "to work unceasingly for gradual and controlled disarmament both of conventional weapons and of all weapons of mass destruction" and appealing to all adults and young people "to dedicate themselves wholeheartedly to promoting the dignity of man and to respect humanitarian values, so making a personal commitment to true peace worldwide".

The text of this message, too, appears in full in this Review.

## **Closing ceremony**

For the closing ceremony the Second World Red Cross and Red Crescent Conference met in Stockholm on 7 September in the Swedish Parliament building. The ceremony was chaired by the Chairman of the Swedish Red Cross and was honoured by the presence of Their Majesties the King and Queen of Sweden.

The ceremony opened with a short address by the King, who said that it was a great honour for his country to host the closing ceremony of the Conference, for Sweden had a long peaceful tradition and was today an ardent promoter of peace. His own family had for several generations taken an active part in the work of the Red Cross. He wished the Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement every success for the future.

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The meeting was then addressed by Mr Börje Wallberg, Chairman of the Swedish Red Cross, who said that the Red Cross had always been concerned with the evils of war and had striven to find ways of preventing and remedying them; but the Conference just ending had spent long hours working hard to make Red Cross action more effective. We have, he said, begun to explore new ways of preventing violence and new ways of limiting it. We want to add to our Movement's strength as a factor of peace, and this Conference has clearly shown that we are doing so in the right way. We already knew that the world needs the Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement in peacetime and time of disaster. We now know equally well that the world needs our Movement as a force for peace. Now that the resources devoted to promoting peace are negligible compared with the enormous sums spent in developing weapons, we are needed more than ever before as a mighty force for peace.

The Conference has stated that for our Movement peace is a dynamic process. In other words it has given us an operational definition of peace as a process of dynamic co-operation that brings the world nearer the ultimate goal of liberation from violence and full observation of human rights.

The path that lies before us is hard, but the Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement has never recoiled from difficulties. We shall be capable of developing the strength of our Movement and turning it into a great force for peace.

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In conclusion Mr Harald Huber, Chairman of the Conference, took stock of the work of the Conference as follows:

We are now coming to the end of the Second World Conference on Peace, and all of us are asking the same question: What has been the outcome of the Conference, and what significance is it going to have for the world, and of course for peace?

Mr Huber paid tribute to the organizers of the Conference and all those who had long before paved the way for it by their thought and

writings. Besides, he said, two invisible forces have done much to make the discussions a success: the first is the spirit of Aaland, one of peace and serenity; the second is the Red Cross spirit. We have come together here from parts of the world that are very different from each other, from countries whose economic, religious and political systems are very often opposed, and whose points of view are therefore completely different. In spite of this nobody has sought confrontation or victory. We have had frank and friendly discussions to find what unites us in the quest for peace and the peaceful settlement of disputes; and we have found it...

The Conference has drafted and adopted Fundamental Guidelines for the Movement's future work for peace. What they principally affirm is that the Red Cross contributes by its humanitarian activities to the dynamic process working towards peace. By practising solidarity all over the world the Red Cross offers a universal ideal that boldly stands up to violence, fear and mistrust and breaks their vicious circle. In doing so it is conscious that its humanitarian work is a contribution not only to peace, but also to fundamental human rights...

The Fundamental Guidelines have a special value of their own, for they express the Movement's consensus on all aspects of its contribution to peace. Wherever its members come from and whatever their own ideas, they are all bound by the same Red Cross concept of peace and of the means our Movement can, or cannot, use to contribute to peace...

Thus our Movement is growing more and more conscious that all it accomplishes contributes in one way or another to the spirit of peace, and from now on it will plan its activities with this in mind. This, I think, is the really new and important thing since the Belgrade Conference, and this was confirmed at Aaland.

Our Conference appeals to all nations and to every man and woman to rally to the cause of peace. Together, we call to every one of them

THROUGH HUMANITY TO PEACE.

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