

INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE FOR THE PROTECTION OF WAR VICTIMS

(Geneva, 30 August - 1 September 1993)

INTRODUCTION

The International Conference for the Protection of War Victims took place in Geneva from 30 August to 1 September 1993. The main aims of the Conference, which was convened by the Swiss government on the initiative of the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), were as follows:

- *to elicit a strong reaction from the various States to widespread violations of international humanitarian law;*
- *to give in-depth and objective consideration to the measures which the States undertake and should further develop to prevent violations of international humanitarian law;*
- *to remind all States that they must join efforts to ensure universal recognition of and respect for international humanitarian law;*
- *to encourage all work undertaken to strengthen the means of repressing violations of international humanitarian law and to provide compensation for victims.*

The Swiss Federal Council invited to the Conference, as full participants, the Member States of the United Nations and its specialized agencies and the States party to the Statute of the International Court of Justice and, as observers, the UN Secretary-General, the institutions belonging to the UN system and the bodies with observer status in the UN General Assembly. The ICRC, appointed Special Rapporteur to the Conference, fell into the latter category. Other participants with observer status at the Conference included the International Fact-Finding Commission, the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, various NGOs, including Amnesty International, the International Commission of Jurists, Médecins sans frontières, etc.

Dr. Boutros Boutros-Ghali, the UN Secretary-General, honoured the Conference with his presence during part of the first plenary session and delivered an address to the participants (see summary, p. 372). Mr. Jan Eliasson, Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs, also spoke on the various aspects of the protection of war victims.

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OPENING OF THE CONFERENCE

(30 August 1993)

The Conference was declared open on 30 August 1993 by Mr. Flavio Cotti, head of the Swiss Federal Department of Foreign Affairs and Chairman of the Conference, in the presence of 815 delegates from various States and organizations. A total of 160 of the 189 States invited attended the Conference. Of those, 39 were represented by ministers, 20 by vice-ministers and 12 by secretaries of state. The Conference was also attended by 16 observers and 16 other participants.

After adopting the agenda and the rules of procedure, the Conference elected 24 vice-chairmen and appointed Mr. Philippe Kirsch, Director General of the Bureau of Legal Affairs of the Canadian Department of External Affairs and International Trade, as Chairman of the Drafting Committee. All the delegations were invited to take part in the work of the Drafting Committee.

The Chairman of the Conference and Mr. Cornelio Sommaruga, President of the ICRC and Special Rapporteur to the Conference, then delivered the following addresses (published below in full):