

The Council of Delegates meeting was honoured by a visit on 30 October from H.M. Queen Elizabeth II, Patron and President of the British Red Cross, who gave the following address:

Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II addresses the Movement

As Patron and President of the British Red Cross Society, I am delighted to welcome you all to the United Kingdom and to Birmingham. I have always been proud of my association with the Red Cross and, as Head of the Commonwealth, it gives me special pride and pleasure to see so many Commonwealth Societies represented here.

Down the ages, successive generations have taken the view that change in their lifetimes has been more dramatic than ever before. 'Twas ever thus, but there is no doubt that, in our lifetimes, a revolution in communications has enabled us to see all too vividly the scale of suffering endured by the victims of natural and man-made disasters across the globe.

That, perhaps, is just one of the reasons for your growth, from 62 National Societies to over 160, in the 47 years since you last met in this country. It is, to say the least, encouraging that the Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement, always the rock on which the world's efforts to give help and comfort to our fellow human beings is founded, is still growing in size and scope.

You are, of course, uniquely qualified, as the world's largest humanitarian organization, to provide this life-saving help and comfort. The protection, medical assistance, and tracing services of the International Committee, and the relief coordinated by the Federation are vital for the survival of countless men, women and children in all continents.

But what, perhaps, is less well recognised is the untiring work of the National Societies in caring for the daily demands of their own populations: for the sick, the injured, for the disabled people, the old, for refugees and for children.

Within this Movement, you have no truck with that depressing and cynical phrase "compassion fatigue": on the contrary, the human and material resources you devote to the relief of hardship grows greater each year.

This is especially admirable in view of recent instances where dedicated and courageous members of the Movement have lost their lives in the course of duty. I pay tribute to them, and I deplore the disregard for the Geneva Conventions which brought about their death.

I call today on all involved in armed conflict to recognize the neutrality, impartiality and independence of the Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement. The sanctity of your emblems, and the freedom for those engaged in your work to do so without challenge of fear, must be respected.

Two centuries ago, Robert Burns wrote that "Man's inhumanity to man makes countless thousands mourn". True then, it is still more true now, as millions, not thousands of us can count the cost of man's inhumanity on our television screens each day.

I pray that, following your example, mankind may turn aside from this inhumanity, and learn to live by the noble principles that guide and direct your Movement.

The Queen presented the Red Cross and Red Crescent Prize for Peace and Humanity to Mr. Ahmed Hassan, President of the Somali Red Crescent, in recognition of the remarkable work carried out by the Society in connection with the conflict and famine that have ravaged its country.

In another ceremony, Botho Prince of Sayn-Wittgenstein-Hohenstein, acting in his capacity as Chairman of the Standing Commission, awarded the Henry Dunant Medal to fourteen individuals (*see inset, p. 487*). Eight of the medals were awarded posthumously, seven of them to ICRC delegates and employees. One of the recipients was Dr. Ahmad Abu-Goura, outgoing Chairman of the Standing Commission, who made a farewell address in which he encouraged the delegates to step up their efforts to make peace a reality for all peoples of the world.

* * *

This session of the Council of Delegates, admirably organized by the British Red Cross, benefited from the active participation of National Societies aware of the challenges today facing the Movement. It was an opportunity to discuss, in a constructive atmosphere, matters of vital importance for the Movement's future.

In a message of thanks, the Council expressed its gratitude to H.M. Queen Elizabeth II and to the officials, staff members and volunteers of the British Red Cross.
