

## Ninth session of the General Assembly of the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies

*(Birmingham, 25-28 October 1993)*

The General Assembly of the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies held its Ninth session from 25 to 28 October 1993 in Birmingham, which was attended by some 500 delegates representing 148 National Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies.

At the opening meeting, the President of the Federation, Dr. Mario Villarroel Lander, noted with pleasure that the Federation had built up its image as an institution capable of rising to its responsibilities. "I would like us", he said, "to persevere along this course for the benefit of our National Societies (...). I am aware that the goal is an ambitious one but we must work in this direction and strive to put into practice the guidelines of the Strategic Work Plan for the Nineties". The President also pointed to the importance of disseminating the Fundamental Principles of the Movement and international humanitarian law and underscored the Movement's special contribution towards ensuring respect for human dignity, in that "the Movement can do nothing less than support a policy of peace and justice. It serves no national interests, only those of people who are suffering and without defence; it comes to the assistance of whoever suffers the pangs of anguish. Is that not one way of sowing the seeds of peace and ensuring respect for human dignity?".

The President of the ICRC, Mr. Cornelio Sommaruga, stressed the need "to improve [the Movement's] efficiency, to prevent, assist and protect, to do so tactfully but also speedily, with no hesitation". Despite the difficulties, courage should never be lost; perseverance, thoroughness and humility must prevail.

The Acting Secretary General of the Federation, Mr. George Weber, presenting his report on its principal activities since the Assembly's

VIIIth Session, was pleased to note that the Federation was playing an increasingly influential and vigorous part in the humanitarian world. He hoped that by the end of the decade the Federation would include 185 strong, well-led, high-performing National Societies and that it would be able to help many more people and reduce vulnerability in disaster-prone areas.

The General Assembly then addressed several subjects which the *Review* outlines below:

## 1. Elections

● *President*: The General Assembly re-elected Dr. Mario Villarroel Lander as President of the Federation for a period of four years.

Dr. Villarroel Lander, who has been President of the Federation since November 1987, received 94 votes to 54 for Dr. Gudjon Magnusson, President of the Icelandic Red Cross.

● *Vice-Presidents*: The General Assembly elected the National Societies and appointed the Vice-Presidents of the Federation as follows for a period of four years:

British Red Cross

*Lady Limerick*

Cuban Red Cross

*Dr. Esmildo Gutiérrez Sánchez*

Honduran Red Cross

*Mrs. Meneca de Mencia*

Jordan National Red Crescent

*Dr. Mohammed Al Hadid*

Malaysian Red Crescent

*Dr. V.T. Nathan*

Spanish Red Cross

*Mrs. Carmen Mestre Vergara*

Sierre Leone Red Cross

*Mr. Lloyd Ado During*

Sudanese Red Crescent

*Professor Mamoun Yousif Hamid*

Dr. Karl Kennel, as President of the Swiss Red Cross, is *ex officio* the 9th Vice-President of the Federation.

● *Executive Council*: The General Assembly elected the 16 National Societies of the following countries as members of the Executive Council:

*Africa*

*Europe*

Ethiopia

Denmark

Morocco

France

Rwanda

Germany

Senegal

Turkey

Swaziland

<i>Asia/Pacific</i>	<i>The Americas</i>
Australia	Brazil
China	Mexico
Japan	United States
Saudi Arabia	

- *Secretary General*: The General Assembly, on the recommendation of the Executive Council, appointed **Mr. George Weber** as Secretary General of the Federation. Mr. Weber had been made Acting Secretary General by the Executive Council in September 1992 and took up office in January 1993.

- *Treasurer General*: The General Assembly, on the recommendation of the Executive Council, appointed **Mr. Bengt Bergman** as Treasurer General of the Federation for a period of four years.

- *Constitutional Commissions*: At its final meeting, the General Assembly elected for four years the chairmen and members of the five Constitutional Commissions: Finance; Disaster Relief; Youth; Health and Community Services; Development.

## 2. Admission of new National Societies

The General Assembly decided to admit the following National Societies as members of the Federation:

Antigua and Barbuda Red Cross  
 Croatian Red Cross  
 Czech Red Cross  
 Malta Red Cross  
 Namibia Red Cross  
 Seychelles Red Cross  
 Slovakian Red Cross  
 Slovenian Red Cross  
 Saint Kitts and Nevis Red Cross  
 Ukrainian Red Cross  
 Vanuatu Red Cross

and confirmed the admission of the Estonian Red Cross.

These admissions bring the total number of members of the Federation to 161.

### **3. Plan and budget for 1994-1995**

The General Assembly approved the Secretary General's budget proposal for 1994 and 1995 amounting, respectively, to SFr. 46,304,000 and SFr. 46,812,000.

### **4. Questions concerning health and social work**

The Health and Community Services Commission discussed several questions which were the subject of decisions, such as strengthening the role of the Federation in communicable diseases prevention and control, water supply and sanitation in Red Cross and Red Crescent relief actions, and primary health care. National Societies were invited to implement long-term activities in these areas and to train staff and volunteers in basic hygiene methods, water quality protection techniques, distribution and storage of water in disaster relief situations and the control of communicable diseases.

In addition, the Assembly recommended that all National Societies and the Federation should pursue their activities to meet the needs of the disabled and to ensure their full integration.

The Assembly urged National Societies to include in their training activities a psychological support programme for the victims of natural disasters and other traumatizing events.

### **5. Red Cross and Red Crescent Development**

The General Assembly, after having adopted the Development Commission's report, requested the Secretary General to prepare a draft Federation Policy on Development to supplement the Principles and Rules for Development Cooperation and, *inter alia*, to target the most vulnerable groups in order to meet their specific needs, to develop the capacities of communities and individuals so that they can help themselves, and to advance disaster preparedness.

### **6. Disaster relief**

The General Assembly, on the basis of the Disaster Relief Commission's recommendations, adopted the Revised Principles and Rules for Disaster Relief, the Federation Policy on Disaster Preparedness, and its

Policy on Rehabilitation and Reconstruction. It recommended that the Council of Delegates approve the Code of Conduct for the Movement and NGOs in Disaster Relief (see "Council of Delegates", p. 481).

## **7. Youth**

The Assembly adopted the report of the Youth Commission, which had concentrated on implementing the Youth Policy drawn up in 1991.

## **8. Strategic Work Plan for the Nineties**

The General Assembly adopted a Strategic Work Plan for the Nineties; it requested all National Societies to select and implement activities outlined in the revised Plan and asked the Executive Council to promote and regularly follow its implementation by the National Societies and the Secretariat. The Assembly also requested the chairmen of the Constitutional Commissions and the Secretary General to monitor implementation of the Plan.

## **9. Women and development**

The General Assembly again urged National Societies to implement specific programmes to reduce the vulnerability of women; it also encouraged the Federation to take part in the Fourth World Conference on Women and Development, to be held in Beijing in 1995.

## **10. Integrity of member Societies**

The General Assembly adopted measures to protect the integrity of National Societies and their ability to carry out their mission effectively and act in accordance with the Fundamental Principles of the Movement. The Secretary General was requested to prepare proposals for action, including a suitable system for reporting by National Societies and an analysis of the characteristics of a strong Society. These proposals will be submitted to the Executive Council at its next meeting.

## **11. 75th Anniversary of the Federation**

The General Assembly took note of a report on plans to mark the 75th anniversary of the Federation in 1994. The plan comprises an exhibition at the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Museum in Geneva from April to October 1994, the publication of a book recounting the history of the Federation, an information campaign on 5 May 1994 and the preparation of materials for National Societies to draw public attention to the anniversary. In addition an exhibition will be mounted in Paris during the Executive Council meeting and ceremonies sponsored by the French Red Cross will be held in May 1994, organized in cooperation with the American Red Cross, the British Red Cross, the Italian Red Cross and the Japanese Red Cross, co-founders of the League (Federation).

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