

**ICRC LAUNCHES MEDIA CAMPAIGN
AGAINST ANTI-PERSONNEL MINES**

“Landmines must be stopped”. With this unequivocal message, the International Committee of the Red Cross launched on 22 November 1995 an international media campaign to ban anti-personnel mines. In a stirring appeal to the media, political leaders and humanitarian organizations, ICRC President Cornelio Sommaruga declared: “Despite your sustained work and ours, the scourge of landmines continues unabated. In the hour we meet here, and in every hour which passes, three people will be killed or crippled for life by these mines”. This mindless carnage, he stressed, “is an affront to humanitarian values. It is an affront to civilization. It can and must be ended”.

The wide-ranging campaign includes a series of advertisements in print and on television and radio designed to mobilize public opinion and to stigmatize the production, stockpiling, transfer and use of anti-personnel mines in the eyes of the world, particularly in anticipation of the forthcoming sessions of the Review Conference of the UN Weapons Convention, which will reconvene in Geneva in January and April 1996. The campaign will be taken up at national level in 1996 by National Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies worldwide. The creative aspects were developed by Abbott Mead Vickers — BBDO, a leading London-based agency with a network of offices in 61 countries.

According to President Sommaruga, the stalemate reached at the Vienna Review Conference reflects the failure of the international community to strike a balance between military interests and humanitarian necessity. He deplored the fact that “there is little political will for dramatic change, and that most military powers, North and South, still resist the elimination of anti-personnel mines from their armouries”. In such circumstances, he warned, “the solution to the mines disaster will have to rely on the dictates of the public conscience”.

The President was joined in his appeal by Archbishop Desmond Tutu and a group of Nobel Peace laureates, including Mairead Maguire, Lech Walesa, Oscar Arias Sanchez, Elie Wiesel, the Dalai Lama and Aung San Suu Kyi.

Mr. Sommaruga concluded by highlighting the role of the media in shaping the public conscience. It was public pressure that led to the banning of chemical weapons and the abolition of apartheid, to the response to famine in West Africa and Eritrea and to the prohibition of torture. "Humanity", he added, "is not impotent in the face of brutality and injustice".
