

Council of Delegates

Seville, 25-27 November 1997

The Council of Delegates which met in Seville, Spain, from 25 to 27 November 1997 undoubtedly marked a turning point in the history of the entire International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement. This issue of the *Review* contains the resolutions adopted by the Council,¹ along with the text of the *Agreement on the organization of the international activities of the components of the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement*.² This brief introduction focuses on the Agreement itself, since by virtue of its scope it constitutes one of the major decisions taken in Seville.

The adoption by consensus of the Agreement forms part of the reappraisal and renewal process begun at the 1991 Council of Delegates in Budapest where, on the initiative of a group of National Societies, it was decided to undertake an in-depth analysis of how best to remedy the problems encountered in the functioning of the various statutory bodies (International Conference, Council of Delegates, Standing Commission), strengthen the unity of the Movement and promote more active cooperation⁴ among all its components. The implementation over the following six years of a series of practical measures requiring no statutory changes did make the Movement's governing bodies more dynamic, but the renewal effort had yet to address the Movement's *raison d'être*, namely the operations conducted by its components in behalf of victims of conflict, natural disasters and other emergency situations. By adopting in Seville

¹ See pp. 140-158.

² See pp. 159-176.

³ Resolution 1 of the Council of Delegates (Budapest, 28-30 November 1991), *IRRC*, No. 286, Jan.-Feb. 1992, p. 43.

the Agreement on the organization of the international activities of the Movement's components, drawn up by an ad hoc advisory commission, the representatives of National Societies, the ICRC and the Federation achieved two significant results: they not only demonstrated that the Council of Delegates could be a productive forum for discussion when it came to common efforts to deal with the humanitarian challenges of our time, but they also devised a new tool which will enable them to carry out their activities more effectively and in a spirit of greater solidarity.

This new Agreement provides for cooperation and partnership between components which under the Statutes have distinct, yet highly complementary spheres of competence. It is fundamentally different from the 1989 Agreement⁴ which was hitherto in force and which it has now replaced. Indeed, it covers the activities of all of the Movement's components and, unlike the previous agreement, is not limited to defining the organization and distribution of tasks within the Movement between the ICRC and the Federation Secretariat. It takes into account the part played by National Societies, in particular as indispensable partners in international relief operations. National Societies are therefore parties to the Agreement in their own right.

The new Agreement organizes the Movement's international activities around two new concepts: that of "lead role", which recognizes the specific tasks entrusted to each component, and the concept of "lead agency" which, in a given situation, confers on one of the components the responsibility of directing and coordinating all international relief operations. Moreover, the Agreement aims to ensure the necessary continuity between international operations carried out in a crisis situation and those developed in its aftermath, i.e., during the normalization or reconstruction phase. The Agreement also broaches the vital question of the development of National Societies and lays the foundations for greater functional cooperation among the various components in the accomplishment of their permanent activities. Lastly, since the effectiveness of an agreement depends on the willingness of the parties thereto to observe it, the final provisions of the Agreement establish mechanisms to monitor its implementation and, in case of dispute, to resolve any problems through a conciliation procedure or, as a last resort, by arbitration. Finally, as the

⁴ Agreement between the International Committee of the Red Cross and the League of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, dated 20 October 1989, *Handbook of the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement*, 13th ed., Geneva, 1994, pp. 517-527.

Agreement is intended to have a dynamic role, it provides that each Council of Delegates shall include an agenda item relative to its implementation, thus ensuring a process of regular review.

In concluding his presentation of what was still only a proposal, the Advisory Commission Chairman called on the Council of Delegates to adopt the new Agreement by consensus, saying: "We go forward or, at great cost and at great risk, we go backwards". On 26 November 1997, in Seville, the Movement gave a clear, unambiguous and forward-looking response by adopting the new Agreement, which has now come into force.

The Review
