

## **Assemblée générale de la Fédération internationale des Sociétés de la Croix-Rouge et du Croissant-Rouge**

*Lors de sa 13<sup>e</sup> Assemblée générale (Genève, 7-10 novembre 2001), la Fédération internationale des Sociétés de la Croix-Rouge et du Croissant-Rouge a élu son nouveau président en la personne de Juan Manuel Suárez del Toro Rivero, de la Croix-Rouge espagnole.*

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

*Juan Manuel Suárez del Toro Rivero of the Spanish Red Cross was elected President of the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies during the 13th General Assembly (Geneva, 7-10 November 2001).*

*In its Plan of Action for the years 2000-2003, the 27th International Conference of the Red Cross and Red Crescent (Geneva, 1999) stressed the urgent necessity to strengthen the protection of children in armed conflict. With the following text the ICRC intends to give some information on problems encountered and on action taken.*

## **Children and war**

### **Comprehensive action to meet specific needs**

The International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) is an impartial, neutral and independent organization whose mission is to protect and assist the civilian and military victims of war and internal violence. It takes action on the basis of the mandate that it has received from the States party to the Geneva Conventions of 1949 and their Additional Protocols of 1977. It also endeavours to prevent suffering in the first place by strengthening and promoting compliance with humanitarian law and universal humanitarian principles. The ICRC founded the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement and bases its work on that Movement's Fundamental Principles. These include neutrality, impartiality and independence, which give the ICRC its unique character. It is this in particular which sets the ICRC apart from other humanitarian organizations.

Most modern conflicts are internal: they mainly affect ethnic, racial and religious minorities within the borders of a single country, with the poorest members of society usually bearing the brunt. The state of terror so often inflicted by the combatants serves as a means of social control; it is a kind of total war permeating the entire fabric of society — its economic, political, social and cultural realms — in which the civilian population is increasingly targeted by the warring parties. This is sometimes a deliberate strategy and no one is spared — indeed the most vulnerable members of society are the first to fall victim to the violence. Children, like women and the elderly, therefore warrant special attention.