

daily bulletin

12th Session of the General Assembly
of the International Federation
of Red Cross and Red Crescent
Societies, Geneva, 1999.
Council of Delegates of the
International Red Cross and Red
Crescent Movement, Geneva, 1999

12^e Session de l'Assemblée générale
de la Fédération internationale des
Sociétés de la Croix-Rouge et du
Croissant-Rouge, Genève, 1999.
Conseil des Délégués du Mouvement
international de la Croix-Rouge et
du Croissant-Rouge, Genève, 1999

Duodécimo periodo de sesiones de
la Asamblea General de la
Federación Internacional de
Sociedades de la Cruz Roja y de
la Media Luna Roja, Ginebra, 1999.
Consejo de Delegados del
Movimiento Internacional de
la Cruz Roja y de la Media Luna Roja,
Ginebra, 1999

الدورة الثانية عشرة للهيئة العامة
الاتحاد الدولي
لجمعيات الصليب الأحمر
والقمر الأحمر،
جنيف عام ١٩٩٩

Speaking out

The Council of Delegates agreed yesterday to adopt a revised resolution encouraging the components of the Movement to pursue advocacy initiatives. These initiatives should aim to create awareness of the conditions of victims of conflicts and disasters and vulnerable people, and while they would normally take the form of dialogue and private diplomacy, public campaigns may also be deemed necessary, the resolution states.



Gilbert Otieno / Federation

The resolution lays out guidelines that National Societies should bear in mind when launching an advocacy campaign, and the criteria any campaign should respect. It was adopted following a redraft to include amendments after more than 10 National Societies intervened on the subject, along with the Federation and the ICRC.

Recalling that there were many conflicting views on advocacy when the subject was raised at the last session of the Council of Delegates, Standing Commission chairman Princess Margriet said: "Many of us think that actions are stronger than words, and the fact that we quietly help thousands of landmine victims every year shows that what we do is what counts."

"Others fear that our traditional approach sends out a rather ambiguous message to a world in which organizations increasingly wear their hearts on their sleeves. They fear that by not speaking out on humanitarian issues, we are in danger of being seen as complacent conformists and collaborators in practices that are incompatible with our fundamental principles," she added.



Children affected by armed conflict



P. Merchez / ICRC

The Council of Delegates has urged the ICRC and the International Federation, in conjunction with interested National Societies and specialized organizations, to draw up guidelines aimed at preventing involvement of children below 18 in armed conflict. It also called for the rehabilitation and reintegration of children affected by participation in conflict, into their communities.

“The situation is of grave concern to the Movement,” Tadateru Konoe, vice-chairman of the Standing Commission said when presenting the report to the Council of Delegates. He outlined the key role many National Societies are playing. Their efforts need to be “accompanied by specific measures that National Societies can implement,” he said.

The resolution thanked the international coordination group, which set up the 'children affected by armed conflict' programme, for its report and requested the Federation, the ICRC and National Societies to pursue and strengthen the implementation of the programme and invited all components of the Movement to report on their activities in favour of children.

As the Council of Delegates was meeting the tragic news came through from Russia of the death of two Red Cross volunteers carrying out humanitarian work near the Chechen capital Grozny.

The workers died when their vehicle, one of five in a convoy clearly marked with Red Cross emblems, came under fire in the village of Chami Yurt, on its return from the border with Ingushetia, which it had been unable to cross.

The ICRC has expressed its shock at this attack against the emblem and Red Cross staff, and appealed to all those involved in the fighting to respect and protect civilians, and to respect the red cross emblem and staff.

Red Cross and Red Crescent and peace

“Today's human rights violations are tomorrow's armed conflicts,” stated a National Society delegation presenting a draft resolution yesterday morning on the Red Cross and Red Crescent and peace.

During the debate, several speakers emphasized the importance of the Movement taking new initiatives to develop its work in conflict prevention and the promotion of peace. The resolution, adopted after amendments, calls on all components of the Movement to ensure that their humanitarian work takes into account the basic human rights of the beneficiaries they serve. It also encourages National Societies to elaborate action oriented programmes on the prevention and mitigation of violence.

Some 100 million street children in the world today

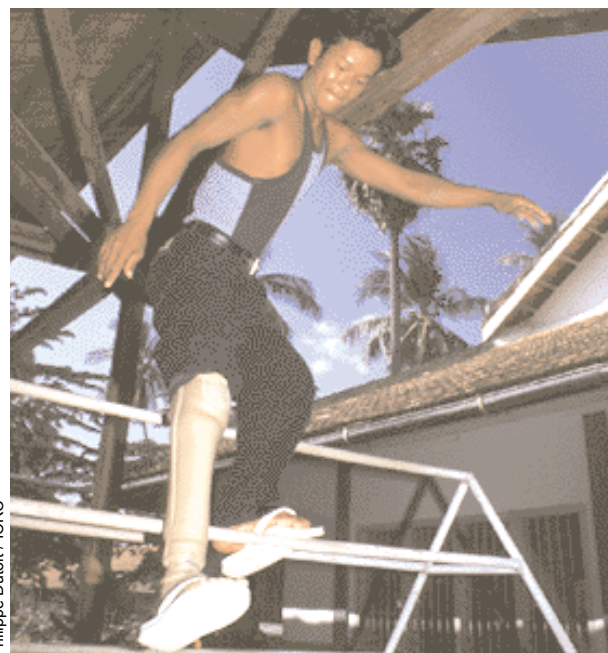
Introducing the report the Mr Koneo said that current estimates suggest that there are some 100 million street children in the world today and that the acute disadvantage and neglect suffered by many of them cannot be questioned. He reminded the Council of Delegates that the Federation has a task force made up of all components of the Movement, which is working on a plan of action.

The revised draft resolution, which was adopted during yesterday's session, complements the previously adopted resolution at the 1997 Council of Delegates and urges National Societies to initiate or become more involved with street children's programmes and to focus on long-term strategies, including advocacy and preventative programmes. The resolution also requests National Societies to actively support the task force and for the Federation to continue to coordinate its work in developing and implementing a plan of action.

Movement's strategy on landmines

A Movement strategy on landmines aimed at providing stimulus, guidance and support for coherent action on this issue, was adopted yesterday by the Council of Delegates. Standing Commission member Georges Harrouk outlined Movement activities in this field and several speakers spoke of the work of their National Society in support of the Ottawa Treaty while others highlighted their Societies' role in advocacy, mine awareness and assistance to landmine victims.

The resolution on a Movement strategy urges the Movement's components to implement the strategy on landmines and asks the ICRC to assume the lead role in this field and to offer advice and support to National Societies wishing to launch programmes within the framework of the strategy.



Philippe Dutoit / ICRC

Support for an International Criminal Court

The establishment of an International Criminal Court (ICC) was described by one delegation yesterday as "one of the major events in international humanitarian law at the end of this century," and a draft resolution on the ICC was broadly welcomed by the Council of Delegates. Introducing the debate, General Harrouk said four essential points needed to be borne in mind concerning the ICC.

The first, he said, is complementarity, to ensure that states carry out their obligation to seek out persons presumed to have committed, or given the order to have committed violations of international humanitarian law and to bring them before the domestic tribunals, irrespective of their nationalities. The ICC should act when national jurisdiction cannot function.

Secondly, the struggle against impunity must continue, and the two ad hoc tribunals dealing with war crimes in ex-Yugoslavia and Rwanda were welcomed.

Thirdly, General Harrouk said an ICC would have a significant impact on the Movement. He stated

that it would allow greater protection for those bringing help to those affected by war, and give a clear legal base to seek out those attacking Red Cross and Red Crescent personnel or their beneficiaries, as well as sending a clear signal to those misusing the red cross and red crescent emblems.

Fourthly, the ICC will not be effective until the Rome Statute is accepted by enough states to come into force. Universal application is a particular concern. Only four have so far ratified the Statute.

The Council of Delegates formally adopted the draft resolution which invited National Societies to support the efforts of the ICRC and the Federation on this issue and encouraged states to comply with their existing obligation under international humanitarian law to suppress and repress violations. The resolution also requested the ICRC to continue its participation in the preparatory conference, and requested that, in consultation with the Federation, the ICRC keep National Societies informed on progress made in establishing an international criminal court.

Arms transfer

The unrestricted availability of arms was variously described as having “horrible effects all over the world”, “taking a terrible human toll” and “enhancing the violation of international humanitarian law and a vicious circle of violence”.

The draft resolution adopted yesterday reiterated this concern, and endorsed the ICRC's study on *Arms availability and the situation of civilians in armed conflict*, mandated by the 26th International Conference. Delegates called on states to review their policies concerning the production, availability and transfer of arms and ammunition to ensure respect of IHL and protect civilians.

The resolution, with amendments, calls on states who have not already done so to elaborate rules, based on respect for international humanitarian law and other appropriate norms governing the transfer and availability of small arms. As a first step, the Council calls on states to halt arms transfers to parties committing or tolerating serious violations of human rights or of international humanitarian law.

Components of the Movement were called on to help ensure clear proposals for action on these concerns, while National Societies were encouraged to raise public awareness of the human costs of the widespread availability of arms and ammunition. The ICRC was requested, and undertook to support such efforts through technical advice and information materials.

Public debate on issues of specific transfers of weapons was discouraged, as such debate could, it was felt, compromise the Movement's neutrality or operational capacity.

Finally, the ICRC was requested, in consultation with the Federation, to submit a report to the next Council of Delegates covering Movement activities and international progress in this field.

“Wearing the hat of president of Lebanese Red Cross,” General Harrouk welcomed the amendments, saying he had been eyewitness to many violent incidents, and noted that many of these had involved small arms.

Renewed support for communications

Tuur Hoste, chairman of the communications forum of the Movement presented a report to the Council of Delegates on the activities of the forum over the past two years. The forum, a small group of communicators working on practical projects for the Movement, was set up by the Council of Delegates in 1995.

Mr Hoste highlighted two particular forum projects in the report, the Movement website and the global pins project. The chairman said the website, launched a few hours earlier, has been developed to represent the Movement as a whole, its history, operations, values and objectives.

He reported that the global pins project had won the support of over half the National Societies. Fifty-two National Societies took part on 8 May 1999, distributing eight million pins. Almost 1.5 million pins were donated by well-resourced societies for use by others, however, 30 National Societies were unable to take part for lack of resources.

Mr Hoste believed the projects outlined in the forum's report to the Council of Delegates showed that solid progress had been made in developing Movement-wide communications. The communications environment was highly competitive, he said, and there was still need for greater acceptance in the Movement of the importance of communications for operations, fund-raising, credibility, campaigns and issues, and the promotion of values and principles. He also said there was a particular challenge to raise the communications capacity of many National Societies and emphasized the importance of funding communications properly.

The forum's future work would be to continue to initiate proactive practical communications projects, provide advice on issues, and strengthen regional communications networks by acting as a channel of communication.

The Council of Delegates accepted the report.

A common voice of the Movement



F. Borst / Federation

The Red Cross Red Crescent movement website was officially launched yesterday by Princess Margriet in the presence of ICRC President Cornelio Sommaruga, Federation President Astrid Heiberg and representatives from the Reuters Foundation, the ICRC and Federation.

Princess Margriet was invited by Tuur Hoste, chairman of the communications forum to inaugurate the site. Mr Sommaruga then clicked on the *history of the Movement* page and Dr Heiberg opened the *International Conference* page.

The website was made possible thanks to the generous support of the Reuters Foundation. Director Stephen Sommerville said the Foundation's members were proud to be associated with "this good, professional website".

He thanked John Owen-Davies and Andrew Harrison for their excellent technical and editorial work in developing in the site.

The Foundation opened *Alertnet*, its own website, two years ago, to facilitate communication between people and organizations working in the humanitarian field.

Building trust

"We are a complex organization, but we have a simple message - we are the *power of humanity*", declared Joanna MacLean, coordinator of the Movement's millennium activities.

Ms MacLean reported that since 8 May 1999 some 160 National Societies organized events under the '*power of humanity*' logo: "this is truly speaking with one voice". One of the main benefits of the millennium year campaign was to increase the profile and long-term positioning of the Movement. "It's about building trust - our beneficiaries must be able to trust the symbol we represent; trust that we can deliver."

A royal bouquet

Warm applause and two prolonged standing ovations greeted the final words of ICRC President Cornelio Sommaruga to the Council of Delegates. "I adopted constant rigour and humility as my motto," he said, adding "the struggle in favour of the ideals we represent is worth continuing. Our past and future failures should stimulate us all the more to go on for new victories. We represent a strength that we call the power of humanity." Calling for even greater efforts on behalf of the Movement, he particularly urged delegates to pass the challenge on to young people.

The chairman of the Standing Commission, Princess Margriet praised the "unique vigour" of Mr Sommaruga, noting that the word retirement did not fit the personality of the man. She added that his guidance as chairman of the Council has



F. Borst / Federation

been "masterly", and paid particular tribute to his "presence, knowledge, experience, invaluable advice and unwavering respect for the fundamental principles."

Presenting a bouquet, she said that Mr Sommaruga had left his personal imprint on the Movement, and that it would not be the same without him.

Spectacular show tonight

Never before has the International Conference opened in such a spectacular way as the 27th will open tonight. 140 artists from five continents will sing, dance, mime and play at 'the *power of humanity*' show, which will begin at 8.15 this evening at the Arena. The show, choreographed especially for this occasion, with focus on the four elements - water, earth, wind and fire.

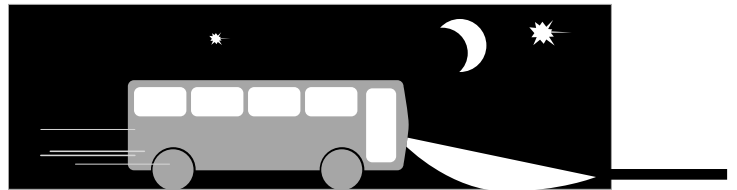
The show has been designed to give delegates a unique experience and also to draw the public's attention to the activities and values of the Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement. It is open to the public and will be transmitted live by Swiss Television to seven European countries. A few hours later, the show will be available on the Internet. In the coming days each National Society delegation will receive a VHS-copy.

Tonight's '*power of humanity*' show has been fully funded by sponsors, allowing all proceeds from ticket sales to be allocated to Red Cross and Red Crescent water projects.



Everyone needs a ticket!

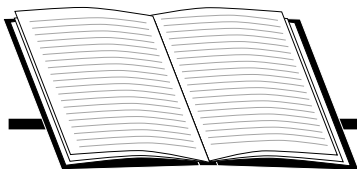
More than 30 National Society delegations have not yet picked up their tickets for tonight's show. The tickets are BLUE - not to be confused with the white invitation cards for the opening ceremony at the CICG or the white invitation cards for the reception at the Arena. Each head of delegation must pick up the tickets at the table located next to the publications stand in the foyer. It will also be possible to buy tickets today, either at the CICG, from 10am to 3.30pm, or at the Arena tonight.



Getting there and back home

Shuttle buses will take delegates from the CICG to the Arena immediately after the opening ceremony this afternoon. Upon arrival at the Arena, guests are invited to attend a reception hosted by the Swiss authorities. Following the reception, please take your seat - you must show your blue ticket - in the Arena before 8.15pm. Please be punctual as the show will be televised live.

After the show, buses will take delegates back to their hotels. Buses marked "Forum Park Penta" will go only to the Penta Hotel, while others will travel downtown to deliver delegates to their hotels.



Publications on sale

A wide variety of ICRC and Federation publications are now available in the CICG foyer. Delegates can purchase materials during the following hours - 3.00pm to 5.00pm today; 10.00am to 4.00pm from Monday, 1 November to Friday, 5 November.