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DECLARATION

RED CROSS AND RED CRESCENT SOCIETIES OF THE BALKAN
COUNTRIES WITH REGARD TO THE CONFLICT SITUATION
IN THE REGION

Deeply distressed by the tragedy which continues to affect many parts of the former Yugoslavia, and Bosnia-Herzegovina in particular, we, leaders of the Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies of the Balkan countries, assembled in Sofia for our 10th Conference, declare as follows:

noting that the civilian population continues to be the target and main object of the fighting and that the grim scenario of destruction, harassment, arbitrary detention and exodus is repeated throughout the conflict area, day after day,

alarmed by the extent of needlessly cruel acts perpetrated by unscrupulous belligerents against innocent civilians such as children, women and the elderly,

concerned that access to the victims is becoming increasingly difficult and that often the delivery of humanitarian aid is either hampered by military and political considerations or subject to unacceptable preconditions imposed by all the sides,

- express our determination to continue to cooperate with and to support the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies and the ICRC, in humanitarian efforts to alleviate the plight of the affected civilian population, detainees, sick and wounded;

- reaffirm the commitment of Red Cross and Red Crescent volunteers to assist these victims in compliance with the Fundamental Principles, in particular those of humanity, impartiality and neutrality;

- decide to strengthen our mutual cooperation and, assisted by the whole International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement, to give our full support to these National Societies in conflict areas, so as to render as effective as possible the humanitarian efforts of the Red Cross and Red Crescent for the victims of these conflicts;

- urge all the warring parties, out of humanitarian concern, to respect the undertakings they have made and in particular in compliance with the rules of international humanitarian law, to allow assistance and protection to be given to the sick and wounded, to treat humanely persons they capture and combatants who surrender, to refrain from attacking and ill-treating the civilian population, and to respect the Red Cross and Red Crescent emblems;

- ask the belligerents to authorize and facilitate the work of the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement, and of all other impartial humanitarian bodies on behalf of the victims.

Sofia, 1/10/93