

Protection of the Public in Wartime

Thank you Mr Chairman,

I am most delighted and proud to see my compatriot chairing this important Commission and wish all success of it under your able chairmanship.

Mr Chairman, like many of my previous speakers, my statement relates to protection of the civilian population in wartime, however, from different angle.

During the Cold War era, the greatest fear of mankind was that a Third World War might break out, and through the massive use of nuclear weapons, humankind would face the danger of extinction. Fortunately, while the threat of nuclear weapons themselves remains, the fear of a world-wide nuclear war is no more or at least remote.

However, because the restraints imposed by the Cold War structure have been eliminated or relaxed, many religious and ethnic conflicts that had been dormant for many years have come to the surface again. Political and economic confusion is fuelling social anxiety in many countries. Because the ability to govern effectively in many countries has weakened, and because weapons that became superfluous after the end of the Cold War have begun to move across national boundaries, such developments are causing concerns about public disorder, crime, and terrorism. Once a conflict occurs, anti-personnel mines, often called the "poor man's weapons" are used indiscriminately, and affect both the public at large and the settling of refugees and displaced people. They also interfere with the activities of humanitarian rescue and relief organisations. United Nations Economic sanctions to prevent or restrain regional conflicts often cannot achieve their objectives, and they may bring unnecessary pain and suffering to common citizens.

The Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement is required to address humanitarian needs created by all these situations.

In a situation where humanitarian issues and concerns are widespread throughout the world, this is a unique International Conference with a good tradition, where the representatives of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies and governments have gathered together in the same setting. It is being held after a lapse of nine long years.

My Delegation understands that there may be reasons to avoid the question of nuclear weapons which is politically highly sensitive and requires much more time and major determinations for solution, and that it was discreetly decided to take up conventional weapons such as anti-personnel mines and inhumane means of waging war, and similar problems that are already forcing sacrifices on ordinary people. This was a very wise decision because these problems can be solved, even tomorrow, if the governments and parties involved in these disputes decide to do so. From this point of view it was encouraging to note that we have already heard about some positive views of the governments in the statements made by their representatives yesterday and this morning. At the same time, if the intent to ban weapons such as the blinding weapons which has already been developed but has not been used in actual fighting is successful, this will be an unprecedented achievement in the history of disarmament, and there will be new hope for the future.

Earlier, I commented that the reasons not to take up the issue of nuclear weapons at this Conference were understandable. However, if in this 50th year after several hundred thousands of people became the victims of atomic weapons, no concern of interest is expressed about nuclear weapons at this Conference with its distinguished tradition of taking up all major humanitarian issues, it would slight the people who support the Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement throughout the world. It goes without saying that we all hope for the abolition of nuclear weapons, which are the ultimate inhumane weapon. In the past, the International Red Cross Conference has already dealt with the problem of nuclear weapons. It has also been the subject of decisions made by other Red Cross / Red Crescent statutory meetings. My Delegation will not therefore voice any dissatisfaction with the fact that this Conference chose not to take up the nuclear issue this year, and that a resolution on the issue was not prepared.

However, my Delegation sincerely hopes to be recorded in the minutes of the Conference that the Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement has not lost its deep concerns for the abolition of nuclear weapons from a humanitarian standpoint. With this understanding, my Delegation fully endorses the draft resolution as proposed.

Thank you Mr Chairman.