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PEOPLE'S REPUBLIC OF CHINA
PERMANENT MISSION AT GENEVA

STATEMENT BY H. E. MR. GU YINGQI, VICE-MINISTER OF HEALTH,
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CONFERENCE FOR THE PROTECTION OF WAR VICTIMS

GENEVA, 30 AUGUST 1993

Mr. Chairman,

At the outset, please allow me, on behalf of the Chinese Government, to extend my sincere congratulations to you on your assumption of the presidency of this Conference. I believe, with your talent and experience, you will surely guide the conference to a complete success. My congratulations also go to the other members of the Bureau. The Chinese Delegation would like to extend the gratitude to the Swiss Government for its efforts in initiating and preparing for this conference. We would also like to commend the work done by ICRC for this conference.

Mr. Chairman,

International Humanitarian Law, which is closely related to the issues of war and peace, is the most ancient branch of international law. With the efforts of mankind in rejecting war, international humanitarian law has been gradually developed and is approaching its perfection. However, the world does not become a peaceful one simply because of the perfection of law. Since the founding of the United Nations, though there has not been a war of world-scale, regional or non-international armed conflicts have kept breaking out. After the end of the Cold War, the genuine peace longed by the people of the world does not come as a automatic consequence. Hegemonism and power politics still exist. Old contradictions and new problems are intermingled with one another. Ethnic contradictions long covered up in the past become prominent. Armed conflicts occur one after another. People of the areas and countries concerned are living in war flames and turmoils. In some areas of armed conflicts, international humanitarian law is not respected. Life and safety of the people are endangered and their human rights and fundamental freedoms violated.

Like other members of the international community, the Chinese Government is deeply concerned with such situations and shows deep sympathy to the conditions of all the war victims.

Mr. Chairman,

Use of force and violation of international humanitarian law are quite out of tune with contemporary mankind's civilizations. Our governments have all undertaken the obligations for peaceful settlement of international disputes and non-use of force under the UN Charter and the obligations for protection of war victims in accordance with relevant treaties of international humanitarian law as well as international practices. Therefore, we are duty-bound to confront the present reality and resolutely curb and redress any actions which are not in line with international humanitarian law and which violate the rights of war victims.

The existence of violations of rights of war victims in today's world is not due to the fact that laws are imperfect. Rather, it is because of disregard or insufficient respect for laws. We are in favour to urge all states to accede to the relevant international humanitarian law treaties, the Geneva Conventions and their additional protocols in particular, so as to enhance the universality of international humanitarian law. All states should be called upon to systematically publicize international humanitarian law with a view to making it known to every household. Rules and regulations in this field should be incorporated into military training programs in particular. We believe that all states should be called upon to take appropriate measures to ensure compliance with international humanitarian law and better respect for the Red Cross, Red Crescent and other relevant emblems. Moreover, all states should make efforts in improving the coordination of humanitarian emergency relief in order to guarantee the relevant humanitarian agencies to provide necessary and timely assistance and protection to all war victims in line with principles of humanitarianism and neutrality. We believe that this conference should severely condemn all violations of international humanitarian law and encourage the international community to consider appropriate measures to curb and punish such violations.

Mr. Chairman,

The Chinese Government has always supported the principle of humanitarianism, which it has spared no efforts to implement. The Chinese armed forces has a glorious tradition to strictly abide by the humanitarian law. As early as in 1956, the Chinese Government ratified the four Geneva Conventions, and acceded to the two protocols in 1983. It acceded to the Convention on Prohibitions or Restrictions on the Use of Certain

Conventional Weapons in 1982. According to its legislative and judicial principles, the international treaties China has acceded to will be, except for reservations, directly implemented as those national legislations. The Chinese Government has paid great attention to the dissemination and popularization of the knowledge of international humanitarian law and the principles and ideals of the Red Cross. To this end, we have taken a series of measures such as publication of national periodicals, releasing films and video tapes, incorporating courses of humanitarian law in law schools, training first-aid personnel and establishing Red Cross Training Centre in Beijing. The Provisional Regulation on the Punishment of Armymen for Crimes of Violating Duties stipulates clearly the criminal punishment for actions violating international humanitarian law. Besides, the Chinese Government has actively supported the activities of the Red Cross Society of China. The Chinese Government will make further efforts to disseminate and implement the principles of international humanitarian law in China.

Mr. Chairman,

Before concluding, I would wish to emphasize two points. Firstly, the promotion of respect for international humanitarian law serves only to reduce the negative effects caused by wars. The fundamental solution to the protection of war victims lies in the avoidance of the outbreak or occurrence of wars or armed conflicts. Therefore, the international community must make greater endeavors to eradicate wars, to eliminate the root causes which might result in wars or armed conflicts as well as to maintain peace. It is a matter of imminent importance at present to urge the parties concerned to the prevailing conflicts to, proceeding from the consideration of maintenance of peace and general interests of the people, renounce the use or threat of force and seek political settlement to their disputes through friendly consultations and negotiations on an equal footing. Secondly, humanitarianism and neutrality remain the cardinal principles of international humanitarian law. Any efforts aimed at promoting the implementation of humanitarian law should be in conformity with these principles. Efforts should be made to avoid getting any political issues involved and confusing international humanitarian law with matters of any other nature.

We hope the above could be reflected in the Declaration to be adopted at the Conference and that the Conference will contribute to the promotion of respect for and implementation of international humanitarian law.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.