VISITS TO PRISONERS OF WAR IN BURKINA FASO AND MALI

Geneva (ICRC) - After hostilities broke out between Burkina Faso and Mali, the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), in accordance with the Third Geneva Convention, was able to visit the prisoners of war held by both parties.

On 30 December 1985, an ICRC delegate saw 16 Burkina Faso prisoners of war in Bamako.

The next day, in Ouagadougou, another ICRC delegate visited two Malian prisoners of war and one Malian civilian.

The authorities and National Red Cross Societies of both countries supported this humanitarian operation. In addition, the League of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies made available to the ICRC its administrative facilities and its medical staff based in Mali and Burkina Faso in connection with the assistance programme it carries out in the Sahel.

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THE ICRC AND THE VOTE DETERMINING WHETHER SWITZERLAND WILL ENTER THE UN

Geneva (ICRC) - The International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), having noted that its name has been mentioned several times in connection with the vote that will determine whether Switzerland enters the United Nations, wished to reiterate its position: this is a choice involving foreign policy that will be made by the people and the cantons of Switzerland. The ICRC will therefore abstain from intervening in this debate and from taking position on either side. Consequently, neither those who support nor those who approve Switzerland's entering the United Nations have reason to draw any substance from the fact that the ICRC will not take sides in this matter.

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Press release no 1517
Geneva, March 17, 1986

THREE NEW MEMBERS OF THE ICRC

Geneva (ICRC) - The Assembly of the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) welcomed three new members into its ranks and, simultaneously, took leave of four active members. Supreme policy-making body of the institution, composed exclusively of Swiss citizens, the Assembly now has 20 members.

The new members are Mrs. Renée Guisan, Mr. Daniel Frei and Mr. Alain Rossier. Those who have left include Mr. Olivier Long and Mr. Viktor Umbricht (who retired for reasons of age), along with Mrs. Marion Bovée-Rothenbach and Mr. Gilbert Etienne.

In addition, the Assembly has granted a leave of absence to Mr. Peter Arbenz, given his new duties as the Federal Council’s Delegate on Refugee Matters.

Some biographical notes on the new members:

Mrs. Renée GUISION, born in 1933, is a citizen of the canton of Vaud, where she did all her schooling. Having obtained a diploma from the Fine Arts School in Lausanne, she worked in the field of graphic arts before going to the United States, where she lived for four years and did volunteer work in the social fields. On her return to
Switzerland, she became very active, after 1971, working to help the elderly, in particular for the "Pro Senectute" Foundation. Her commitment to social work deepened with her participation in organizations such as volunteer services association of the canton of Vaud, "Pro Juventute", and, since 1977, for the "Institut de la Vie" which named her as its General Secretary.

Mr. Daniel FREI was born in 1940 in St. Gallen. When he was 24 years old, he obtained his doctorate in History from the University of Zurich. His studies took him to England, to the London School of Economics and Political Science, and then to Geneva, where he received a diploma (in 1967) from the Graduate Institute of International Studies. In 1971, he became Professor of Political Science at the University of Zurich. Professor Frei is the director of the Swiss Institute for International Research. He is closely associated with the work of UNITAR (the United Nations Institute for Teaching and Research), UNIDIR (the United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research), and he is also a member of the Club of Rome. Professor Frei is the author of numerous publications dealing, in particular, with questions of East-West relations, neutrality, international cooperation and disarmament.

Alain B. ROSSIER was born in Lausanne in 1930. He obtained his doctorate in medicine in 1958 from the University of Lausanne and became a privatdocent at the University of Geneva in 1970. On the staff of many hospitals in Switzerland, France and the United States, Professor Rossier is a specialist in spinal cord injuries, and teaches this subject in Boston (USA). Professor Rossier is the author of numerous publications, especially in the field of traumatic injury and the rehabilitation of trauma cases involving the spinal cord. He is a member of many medical societies and is currently chairman of the International Medical Society for Paraplegia.

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Press release No. 1518
Geneva, 12 June 1986

THE PRESIDENT OF THE FEDERAL REPUBLIC OF GERMANY
VISITS THE ICRC

Geneva (ICRC) - As part of his visit to Geneva, His Excellency Dr. Richard von Weizsaecker, President of the Federal Republic of Germany, today visited the headquarters of the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC).

His Excellency Dr. von Weizsaecker was accompanied by Dr. Hans Arnold, Ambassador of the Federal Republic of Germany to the United Nations in Geneva, and by members of his staff. He was received by Mr. Alexandre Hay, ICRC President, by members of the International Committee and its Directorate. His Excellency Dr. von Weizsaecker and Mr. Hay discussed various humanitarian issues and the ICRC President took the opportunity to express the institution's great appreciation for the support given by the Federal Republic of Germany.

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THE PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF SENEGAL AT THE ICRC

Geneva (ICRC) – Mr. Abdou Diouf, President of the Republic of Senegal and President of the Organization of African Unity (OAU), and Mrs. Abdou Diouf, Honorary President of the Senegalese Red Cross, today visited the headquarters of the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC).

Mr. Diouf was received by Mr. Alexandre Hay, President of the ICRC, together with members of the Committee, the Directorate and heads of the main services of the Institution. Sheik Hamidu Kane, Minister of Planning and Co-operation, Mr. André Sonko, Minister of Public Offices, Work and Employment, Mrs. Mantoulaye Guene, Minister of Social Development, as well as Mr. Alioune Sene, Ambassador to Switzerland and Permanent Representative of Senegal to the Office of the United Nations at Geneva, accompanied Mr. Diouf during his visit.

During the meeting a comprehensive exchange of views on the present situation in Africa took place between the President of the OAU and the leading members of the ICRC. Indeed, of the ICRC’s 37 delegations throughout the world, 14 are in Africa. Consequently the ICRC and the OAU have a number of common concerns and close dialogue between the two organizations is therefore essential.

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PRESS RELEASE

Press release no 1520
Geneva, 9 July 1986

APPOINTMENT OF THE FUTURE PRESIDENT OF THE ICRC

Geneva (ICRC) - The International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) has approached Mr. Cornelio Sommaruga, at present Swiss State Secretary for External Economic Affairs, to succeed Mr. Alexandre Hay, who has expressed the desire to retire from the presidency of the Institution before the end of his third term of office, which expires at the end of 1988.

Mr. Sommaruga has just accepted the ICRC’s proposal. He will take up his duties during 1987 on a date to be specified later. Until then President Hay will continue in office full-time.

M. Sommaruga has already been appointed a member of the Assembly of the International Committee of the Red Cross and will take up his seat once he has left the Federal Administration of Switzerland.

Born in Rome in 1932, a Swiss citizen originating from Lugano (Ticino), Mr. Cornelio Sommaruga graduated with a doctorate in law from the University of Zurich in 1957. He entered the services of the Swiss Confederation in 1960. Until 1973 he held various diplomatic posts in The Hague, Bonn, Rome and Geneva. Appointed Deputy Secretary-General of the European Free Trade Association (EFTA) in 1973, he returned three years later to the Federal Office for Economic Affairs. He became Delegate of the Swiss Government for Trade Agreements in 1980 and, in 1984, he replaced Mr. Paul Jolles as State Secretary for External Economic Affairs.

Mr. Sommaruga has just been awarded the Prix Contact (Contact Prize) by a Group of Swiss Economic Journalists of Switzerland in recognition of his open and responsive attitude toward the media in the performance of his present duties.

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The International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), together with the League of the Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies and the recognized National Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, is one of the three components of the International Red Cross. An independent humanitarian institution, the ICRC is the founding body of the Red Cross. As a neutral intermediary in case of armed conflicts or disturbances, it endeavours on its own initiative or on the basis of the Geneva Conventions to protect and assist the victims of international and civil wars and of internal troubles and tensions, thereby contributing to peace in the world.
Press release No 1521
August 28, 1986

RECOGNITION OF TWO NEW NATIONAL SOCIETIES

Geneva (ICRC) - The International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) has recognised the Red Crescent Society of United Arab Emirates and the Red Cross Society of Guinea-Bissau.

This recognition, which takes effect today August 28, 1986, brings to 139 the number of National Societies which are members of the International Red Cross.

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SOUTHERN SUDAN: THE ICRC EXTREMELY CONCERNED

Geneva (ICRC) - The International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) wishes to express its extreme concern for civilians affected by military operations in Southern Sudan, whether they are living in certain towns that are at present totally isolated from the rest of the world or in rural areas.

The rules and the spirit of international humanitarian law - and in particular the fundamental principle of humanity - require the belligerants to spare non-combatants and to do everything in their power to ensure that civilians receive what is necessary for survival. The ICRC therefore makes a solemn appeal to the Parties concerned to provide it with all the security guarantees and facilities required for the accomplishment of its mission on behalf of the victims of the conflict.

Since 15 August, the day that the airlift organized by the ICRC for the besieged town of Wau was interrupted, the Sudanese People's Liberation Army (SPLA) has, in particular, been approached many times, to enable the ICRC to resume its relief operation in the town of Wau, in other localities and in rural areas. So far, all these efforts have been in vain.

Nine ICRC delegates have remained in the town of Wau since 15 August, and they witness every day the urgent needs of the population.

As far as the rural areas of Southern Sudan are concerned, last April in Narus the ICRC was able to launch an operation, which currently benefits 30,000 people belonging to the Toposa tribe. Well aware of needs in other rural areas, the ICRC reaffirms its determination to reach an agreement that will allow it to bring protection and assistance to all the victims of the conflict, wherever they may be found.

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The following is an eyewitness report transmitted by radio from Wau by one of our delegates, Iolanda Jon. Miss Jon participated in the airlift on 14 August. She is a member of the team that has stayed in Wau.

HUNGER GROWS WHILE HOPE FADES

It is 7 pm and night has fallen. In a disused building, two figures silhouetted against the light of an oil lamp are holding a sack and ticking off names on a piece of paper. Other figures, men, women and children are lying on the floor, with a few scraps of cloth for bedding.

The scene is Wau in southern Sudan, one month after the suspension of the airlift organized by the ICRC to get food supplies to the starving, drought-stricken population isolated by the conflict. The disused building is the Catholic mission school which Mr. Joseph Nyekindi, the Bishop of Wau, closed at the end of August after it had become impossible to feed the pupils. The people who have found shelter there lie on the ground, waiting silently. For months now, the mission has been taking in people who have fled the conflict, some of them walking hundreds of kilometres to Wau. They have joined people from outlying suburbs of the city whose houses and possessions have been destroyed during the fighting.

The two standing figures are members of the Wau Relief Organization. From their sack they take tiny loaves of bread, each made from 80 grams of flour and containing 80 calories. Checking against their list, they give one loaf per child to each family. This is the daily ration for the 1,000 or so people at the mission. If there is something left after bread has been distributed to those on the list, it is given to children from the city who crowd in front of the Bishop's house every evening in the hope of getting something to eat.

The distribution takes place quite late to prevent other people, who are less badly off but nevertheless hungry, from trying to pounce on the bread. This actually did happen on 9 September, when a riot broke out in front of the main bakery because yet again there was not enough flour to go around. The once noisy and bustling street is now deserted: to avoid violence, bread is no longer sold. The Bishop therefore has

500 loaves made daily in an improvised bakery and distributed at nightfall in an almost spectral calm and
silence, behind the high mission walls.

The people who have sought refuge at the mission and the other starving inhabitants of Wau make pathetic attempts to stave off their hunger. During the day, they wander through the city looking for pumpkin leaves and cassava (manioc). But, apart from some vitamins, these have no nutritional value.

The noose is tightening. The famine, which started in the camps for displaced persons, has now overtaken the outlying areas of Wau, where the parched crops are long dead, and threatens the city centre. But it takes time for a city to succumb completely. While distress creeps slowly and surreptitiously into some parts of the city, it rages through others. The famine often kills silently, unspectacularly, and above all slowly. "The really horrible thing is that these people often have the time to literally watch themselves die", says Stephane Jaquemet, head of ICRC operations in southern Sudan. Indeed, if ICRC relief operations cannot be resumed very soon, the entire city and its surrounding area will die such a death.

The Agok camp for displaced persons, situated on the city's outskirts, is a form of such long-drawn-out agony. One in three children was already suffering from severe malnutrition at the beginning of August, according to surveys conducted by ICRC nurses. Large crowds used to gather around the ICRC delegates' vehicle, but recently, only a few people come to ask whether there is any sign of hope and to announce the deaths from starvation of both children and adults. Like those living at the Catholic mission, most of the camp's 5,000 residents leave at dawn for the city to look for pumpkin leaves and cassava. A small boy with stick-like arms devours some peanuts, not even spitting out the shell. Afterwards he is still hungry. The next stage for very young children is that of marasmus, in which they are so weakened that they have to be force-fed. The two nurses in the ICRC team have noticed a sharp rise in the number of children who have reached this stage, especially among the displaced. Children with malnutrition are easy targets for disease. Children from the worst-off families have malaria and, of course, diarrhoea. "I come to see them (the people at the mission) every day", said one of the Indian nurses at the Health Training Institute in Wau, "what can we do? Medicines are of no use to them. What they need is food."

The meagre harvest of peanuts and sorghum will sustain those possessing fields until the end of October. After that, there will be absolutely nothing left.

One month ago, the capital of Bahr-el-Ghazal had 130,000 to
170,000 residents, including the displaced civilians. According to reliable sources, some 20,000 have left since the ICRC airlift was interrupted. Others continue to arrive in the city but they are less numerous than those leaving.

We have heard of many displaced people who still, they hope, have livestock in their home villages. They prefer to send their children back there, despite the unsafe conditions, rather than watch them slowly starve. But those who are now living in the camps around Wau (Agok, Majak and Zagallona) have lost everything they left behind. When ICRC delegates and representatives of relief organizations came to announce that there was no more food, the people here all expressed their desire to remain. One of the leaders in the Agok camp said that they had no hope elsewhere so they preferred to die where they were. That would be their message to the rest of the world.

Iolanda Jon, ICRC delegate in Wau

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ICRC OPERATION IN NARUS

The ICRC is currently bringing assistance to some 30,000 people in the Narus camp in Southern Sudan. Those who benefit from this food aid program are members of the "Toposa" tribe and numbered only 3,000 when the operation began in April. This increase in numbers bears witness to the dramatic situation of those living in rural areas, also affected by military operations. The people receiving assistance in Narus are given monthly rations of food. In addition, the ICRC distributes four protein-enriched meals per day to 600 malnourished children.

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Geneva (ICRC) - The International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) has recognized the Red Cross Society of Angola, the Red Cross Society of Guinea (Conakry), the Red Cross Society of Saint Lucia and the Red Cross Society of Suriname.

This recognition, which took effect on October 1, 1986, brings to 143 the number of National Societies which are members of the International Red Cross.

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PRESS RELEASE

Press release no 1524
October 15, 1986

RECOGNITION OF A NEW NATIONAL SOCIETY

Geneva (ICRC) - The International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) has recognized the Red Crescent Society of Djibouti.

This recognition, which took effect today, October 15, 1986, brings to 144 the number of National Societies which are members of the International Red Cross.

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South Africa: the ICRC has been asked to suspend its activities

Geneva (ICRC) - The delegation of the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) in the Republic of South Africa has been requested by the South African Government to suspend its activities and leave the country within a period which has not yet been officially announced.

This demand follows the decision taken by the Twenty-fifth International Conference of the Red Cross, which is currently in session in Geneva, to suspend the participation in the Conference of the South African Government delegation. The ICRC considered that it could not take part in a vote on the participation of the South African Government delegation, since such a vote was against the rules and procedures of the Conference. ICRC President Alexandre Hay said, "What has been called into question for the first time is the representative character at the Conference of the Government delegation of a State which is - and no one contests the fact - party to the Geneva Conventions. Now any party to the Geneva Conventions is, by right, a member of the Conference. Therefore the exclusion of the delegation of a member State runs counter to the Statutes as they stand."

The International Conference of the Red Cross is the supreme deliberative body of the Red Cross Movement and is composed of the 165 States party to the Geneva Conventions, the 144 duly recognized National Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, the League of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies and the ICRC, which - like the other participants - has a single vote.

The activities which the ICRC delegates have been carrying out in South Africa stem from the ICRC's right of humanitarian initiative and not from a mandate under the Geneva Conventions. The activities in question consist of visiting about 300 sentenced prisoners, supporting the work of the National Society, and giving aid to 20,000 Mozambican refugees in the east of the country.

The ICRC now fears that the decision taken by the Twenty-fifth Conference may have serious consequences for the people it assists and protects in the field.

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The International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), together with the League of the Red Cross Societies and the recognized National Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, is one of the three components of the International Red Cross. An independent humanitarian institution, the ICRC is the founding body of the Red Cross. As a neutral intermediary in case of armed conflicts or disturbances, it endeavours on its own initiative or on the basis of the Geneva Conventions to protect and assist the victims of international and civil wars and of internal troubles and tensions, thereby contributing to peace in the world.
Geneva (ICRC) - The South African authorities, on 28 October 1986, confirmed to the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) that its delegates must leave South African soil at the latest on 30 November 1986.

The ICRC deeply regrets this decision, which directly affects the people it has assisted and protected to this day.

With no choice but to abide by the decisions of the South African government, the ICRC means nevertheless to continue its efforts to resume as soon as possible all of its activities in the country.
PRESS RELEASE

Press release no 1527
November 26, 1986

SOUTH AFRICA: THE ICRC AUTHORIZED TO PURSUE ITS ACTIVITIES

Geneva (ICRC) - The authorities of the Republic of South Africa have just informed the delegation of the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) in Pretoria that, as a result of representations by the President of the ICRC, they have reconsidered their position concerning the presence of the ICRC on their territory. They have confirmed that ICRC delegates may remain in the country and resume work. The ICRC took note of this decision with great satisfaction.

All activities had to be suspended one month ago, when the South African authorities gave the ICRC notice to leave the country by November 30, following a decision taken by the XXVth International Conference of the Red Cross to suspend the South African government delegation from participation in the work of this Conference (held in Geneva, October 23-31, 1986).

During the course of the debate at the Conference, the ICRC insisted upon reminding the Assembly of the right of all States Parties to the Geneva Conventions to participate in the work of the International Conference of the Red Cross. Concerned to safeguard the universality of international humanitarian law, the ICRC refused to participate in the vote on the suspension of the South African government delegation from the Conference.

In accordance with this point of view, the ICRC will now endeavor to reactivate its operations in South Africa and the southern African region, interrupted since October 26, 1986.

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The International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), together with the League of the Red Cross Societies and the recognized National Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, is one of the three components of the International Red Cross.

An independent humanitarian institution, the ICRC is the founding body of the Red Cross. As a neutral intermediary in case of armed conflicts or disturbances, it endeavours on its own initiative or on the basis of the Geneva Conventions to protect and assist the victims of international and civil wars and of internal troubles and tensions, thereby contributing to peace in the world.
PRESS RELEASE

Press release no 1528
November 30, 1986

ICRC ACTIVITIES IN IRAN

Geneva (ICRC) - On April 4, 1986 a letter was addressed by Mr. Alexandre Hay to Dr. Ali Akbar Velayati, Foreign Minister of the Islamic Republic of Iran, in which the President of the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) proposed that Iran and the ICRC put past differences behind them and work together for the full implementation of international humanitarian law. The letter was followed by talks during the month of May 1986 in Tehran, between the government of the Islamic Republic of Iran, represented by Dr. Ali Akbar Velayati, the deputy Prime Minister Ali Reza Moayeri, other high ranking officials, and a delegation from the ICRC led by Mr. André Pasquier, Director of Operations.

During these talks all humanitarian aspects of the ongoing armed conflict between Iran and Iraq were examined in detail: respect for civilians, protection of POWs, the missing in action, use of prohibited weapons. Other possible measures to ensure better respect for international humanitarian law were also considered.

It was agreed that ICRC visits to Iraqi POWs captive in Iran will be resumed as soon as the necessary arrangements are settled.

The ICRC welcomes these positive developments which should permit it to fulfill its mandate for the benefit of all victims of the conflict. On this occasion, the ICRC wished to reaffirm some of the fundamental rules and norms of international humanitarian law:

- civilians and civilian objects must not be attacked;
- all prisoners of war must be visited by ICRC delegates;
- the use of chemical weapons is strictly prohibited;
- parties to the conflict must, in full collaboration with the ICRC, take all necessary measures to trace the missing and identify the dead.

The International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), together with the League of the Red Cross Societies and the recognized National Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, is one of the three components of the International Red Cross. An independent humanitarian institution, the ICRC is the founding body of the Red Cross. As a neutral intermediary in case of armed conflicts or disturbances, it endeavours on its own initiative or on the basis of the Geneva Conventions to protect and assist the victims of international and civil wars and of internal troubles and tensions, thereby contributing to peace in the world.
THE ICRC'S FUTURE PRESIDENT JOINS THE COMMITTEE

Geneva (ICRC) - The members of the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), meeting in Assembly on December 3 and 4, 1986, welcomed a new member: Mr. Cornelio Sommaruga, future President of the institution.

Last July, Mr. Sommaruga accepted the ICRC's call to take the institution's highest office. On May 1, he will succeed President Alexandre Hay, who will retire after more than ten years at the head of the ICRC.

Mr. Sommaruga's admission to the ICRC Assembly brings to 21 the number of members of the supreme policy-making body of the International Committee of the Red Cross.

Mr. Cornelio Sommaruga previously held a prominent post in the Federal Administration of Switzerland, that of State Secretary at the Office of External Economic Affairs.

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The International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), together with the League of the Red Cross Societies and the recognized National Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, is one of the three components of the International Red Cross. An independent humanitarian institution, the ICRC is the founding body of the Red Cross. As a neutral intermediary in case of armed conflicts or disturbances, it endeavours on its own initiative or on the basis of the Geneva Conventions to protect and assist the victims of international and civil wars and of internal troubles and tensions, thereby contributing to peace in the world.
Press release
Geneva/Bern, 27 February 1986

The Twenty-fifth International Conference of the Red Cross to be held next October in Geneva

Geneva/Bern - The Twenty-fifth International Conference of the Red Cross will take place in Geneva from 23 to 31 October 1986. It will be organized and hosted by the Swiss Red Cross, and will consist of delegations from 136 duly recognized National Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, 164 States party to the Geneva Conventions, the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) and the League of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies.

The Twenty-fifth International Conference of the Red Cross, to be held five years after the previous Conference, which took place in Manila (Philippines), will have as its theme "United for humanity". Among the Movement's main concerns, priority will be given to its desire to foster the international community's awareness of the problems resulting from failure to implement international humanitarian law. It is paradoxical that although the four Geneva Conventions of 1949 for the protection of victims of armed conflicts are now binding on virtually every State in the world, their implementation and observance meet with such obstacles among those who take political and military decisions that very often they go unheeded, thus leaving victims without protection, at the mercy of the adversary. Also up for discussion will be the critical issue of torture: its prevention and elimination are high on the Movement's list of priorities.
The Conference will also evaluate the situation as regards ratification of the Protocols additional to the Geneva Conventions (today, nine years after the adoption of the Protocols, about 50 States have acceded to them) and of efforts made by Governments and National Societies to promote knowledge and understanding of international humanitarian law among various target groups, the armed forces in particular.

The Conference will furthermore be called upon to rule on the draft revised Statutes of the International Red Cross. It will deal with various issues concerning National Societies' permanent activities, with the development of new Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies in countries which recently became independent, with international co-operation in the event of natural disasters, activities in favour of refugees, the rôle of medical staff in emergencies, etc.

This is the first time since 1925 that the International Conference of the Red Cross - which as a rule meets every four years - has been held in Geneva, the native city of the Movement's founder, Henry Dunant.

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Press release
Geneva, 23 October 1986

OFFICIAL OPENING OF THE XXVth INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE OF THE RED CROSS

Geneva (Information and Press Service - XXVth International Conference of the Red Cross) - The XXVth International Conference of the Red Cross was officially opened on Thursday afternoon 23 October 1986 in Geneva, in the presence of Mr. Alfons Egli, President of the Swiss Confederation; of the representatives of the delegations of 144 National Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies; of 165 States Parties to the Geneva Conventions, and of the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) and the League of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies.

The XXVth International Conference of the Red Cross will continue until 31 October, and has as its theme "United for Humanity". The principal items on its agenda include the question of respect for international humanitarian law. The Conference will also take stock, in the light of the report presented by the ICRC on its activities worldwide, of the present state of ratifications of the Protocols Additional to the Geneva Conventions, to which about 50 States have so far acceded; and it will discuss, and decide whether to approve, a draft revised text of the Statutes of the International Red Cross.

The President of the Swiss Confederation said in his address that in the world of today, in which there was so much tension, it was extremely important that representatives of rival countries should be able to meet and discuss their differences, and that he was convinced that greater commitment to respect for international humanitarian law would help to bring about conditions favourable to negotiation and the peaceful settlement of disputes.

M. Kurt Bolliger, President of the Swiss Red Cross; Dr. Ahmad Abu Goura, Chairman of the Standing Commission of the International Red Cross; Mr. Christian Grobet, Chairman of the State Council of Geneva; Mr. Erik Suy, Director General of the United Nations Office at Geneva; Mr. Alexandre Hay, President of the International Committee of the Red Cross; and Mr. Enrique de la Mata, President of the League of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, also spoke at the opening ceremony.

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CI/115
Press Release

Geneva, 27 October 1986

THE TWO COMMISSIONS OF THE XXVth INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE OF THE RED CROSS BEGIN THEIR PROCEEDINGS

Geneva (Information and Press Service of the XXVth International Conference of the Red Cross)

The proceedings of the two commissions of the XXVth International Conference of the Red Cross began two days late, on Monday 27 October 1986. The first commission is chaired by Mr Alioune Sené, Head of the Senegalese Government's delegation, and deals with respect for, and dissemination of, international humanitarian law in the light of the progress report of the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) presented by its President Mr Alexandre Hay. The second is chaired by Mr Enrique Villaroel Lander, President of the Venezuelan Red Cross and a Vice-President of the League of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies; it will deal with revision of the Statutes of the International Red Cross, the present text of which dates from 1952.

The normal course of the Conference was disturbed by the long discussion on Thursday 23 October 1986, immediately after the opening ceremony, as to whether the delegation of the Government of the Republic of South Africa should be allowed to take part in the Conference. Speaking on a point of order and on behalf of the African group, the delegation of the Government of Kenya placed before the Assembly a motion calling for the suspension of the representatives of the South African Government from the proceedings of the Conference. The motion was put to the vote by roll call and adopted by 159 votes in favour to 25 against, 8 delegations abstaining. The vote was taken after more than 36 hours' discussion on procedure, firstly as to whether the plenary assembly was competent to suspend a full member State from taking part in the International Conference of the Red Cross, and secondly on the method of voting. Some 50 delegations, the great majority of them representing delegations of National Red Cross Societies, refused to take part in the vote on the grounds that the suspension was contrary to the Statutes of the International Red Cross and the Fundamental Principles of the Movement.

The vote having been taken, the delegation of the South African Government was requested to withdraw from the Conference. No objection was however raised at any time to the delegation of the South African Red Cross Society's taking part in the Conference. A second motion, countersigned by several delegations was then put before the Assembly, proposing that the Conference should be adjourned sine die. This was defeated in a secret ballot by 178 votes to 52, with 5 abstentions.

In view of the delay thus occasioned the proceedings of the Conference will probably last until 29 October 1986, and the plenary and closing sessions until 1 November 1986.

CI/151
PRESS RELEASE

Geneva, October 31, 1986

Closure of the proceedings of the XXVth International Conference of the Red Cross

Geneva (Information and Press Service of the XXVth International Conference of the Red Cross).

The XXVth International Conference of the Red Cross, chaired by Mr. Kurt Bolliger, President of the Swiss Red Cross, ended on Friday evening 31 October 1986. It was attended by some 1200 delegates representing 137 National Societies, 125 Governments Parties to the Geneva Conventions, the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) and the League of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, and was marked at the beginning by the suspension of the delegation of the Government of South Africa.

Following the proceedings of the two Commissions the Plenary Meeting adopted, by consensus, about 30 resolutions covering all aspects of Red Cross and Red Crescent activities both in wartime and peacetime. The Conference stressed that parties to armed conflicts should scrupulously observe international humanitarian law. It also adopted the new Statutes of the International Red Cross, henceforth known as the "International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement".

Lastly the XXVth Conference proceeded to elect the five members of the Standing Commission who will take their seats beside the two ICRC and two League representatives. The new members are Mr. Ahmad Abu Goura (Jordan), Chairman of the Standing Commission, Botho Prince of Sayn Wittgenstein-Hohenstein (Federal Republic of Germany), Mr. Janos Hantos (Hungary), Mrs. Mavy Harmon (Brazil) and Mr. Byron Hove (Zimbabwe).

The XXVIth International Conference of the Red Cross and Red Crescent is to be held in 1990 in Colombia.

CI/220/EA/31.10.86