PRESS RELEASE

Press release No. 1805
21 March 1996

PRESIDENT OF UKRAINE VISITS THE ICRC

Geneva (ICRC) - The President of Ukraine, Mr Leonid Kuchma, who is currently on a visit to Geneva, was today received at the headquarters of the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) by President Cornélio Sommaruga.

After introducing the members of the Committee and senior staff of the institution to his guest, the ICRC President thanked the Government of Ukraine for its interest in humanitarian issues. He mentioned the responsibilities assumed by Ukraine as a State party to the Geneva Conventions, including the dissemination of international humanitarian law, the adoption of legislative measures necessary for its implementation, and the duty to ensure respect for the law in countries in conflict by backing the work of international bodies. Mr Sommaruga pointed out that ICRC activities largely depended on the goodwill and support of States, and stressed the importance of cooperation with the Red Cross Society of Ukraine so as to help it develop its operational capacity throughout the country. Finally, referring to the headquarters agreement signed in December 1995, President Sommaruga welcomed the recent opening of an ICRC regional delegation in Kyiv.

In reply, President Kuchma paid tribute to the ICRC for its action in numerous crisis situations around the globe. The Ukrainian Head of State also assured the ICRC of his government's full support for the institution's humanitarian work.

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Press release No. 1806
16 April 1996

ICRC APPEALS FOR RESPECT FOR CIVILIAN POPULATION IN LEBANON AND NORTHERN ISRAEL

Geneva (ICRC) - The International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) is gravely concerned by the violence of the bombardments that have occurred in southern Lebanon and northern Israel during the last few days. The bombing in southern Lebanon has forced most of the Lebanese civilian inhabitants to flee their towns and villages. The civilian population of northern Israel is also affected by rocket attacks. The ICRC estimates that nearly 400,000 people have had to flee their homes in southern Lebanon and another 10,000 in northern Israel.

To help meet the most pressing needs of the population affected by the events, the ICRC has set up an emergency programme throughout the region, giving priority to people who have remained in their homes.

The ICRC hereby issues a solemn reminder to the warring parties of their duty to comply with the rules of international humanitarian law, which protect the victims of war. In particular, it stresses that the following acts are prohibited:

- attacks on civilians or civilian property;
- indiscriminate attacks likely to affect civilians and civilian property as well as military objectives;
- attacks on medical facilities, transports or units;
- acts or threats of violence whose primary purpose is to spread terror among the civilian population.

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The ICRC also reminds the parties of the following:

- to ensure that civilians are spared, combatants must distinguish themselves from the population and refrain from using it for military purposes, in particular to protect themselves from hostilities;
- staff, vehicles and buildings used for medical and humanitarian purposes must be respected in all circumstances;
- work to protect and assist the civilian population, the wounded and sick, and prisoners must be authorized and facilitated; to this end, ICRC delegates must be guaranteed access to all victims, in accordance with the provisions of international humanitarian law.
Press release No. 1807
19 July 1996

NEW ICRC MEMBER

Geneva (ICRC) - The International Committee of the Red Cross, meeting in Assembly on 4 July 1996, elected Jean-Roger Bonvin as a new member. This brings membership of the Committee, which is exclusively made up of Swiss citizens, to 21.

Jean-Roger Bonvin, of Chermignon in the canton of Valais, was born in 1934. He has a doctorate in economics from the University of St. Gallen. He worked for UNESCO's International Institute for Educational Planning and was then sent by the Swiss Development Cooperation Agency to head the Economics Faculty of the University of Burundi, a position which he held from 1970 to 1979, while serving as Swiss Honorary Consul in the country. In 1980 he joined the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) in Paris, where he ran the research programme on North-South relations; he was subsequently appointed Director of the OECD Development Centre, and became its President in 1994. He has also given lectures in development economics at the Universities of Paris V, Lille and Lausanne.

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Press release No. 1808
29 August 1996

ICRC ELECTS NEW EXECUTIVE BOARD MEMBER

Geneva (ICRC) - The International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), meeting in Assembly on 29 August, expressed its warmest thanks to Director General Dr Peter Fuchs for the outstanding services he has rendered to the institution. Dr Fuchs does not intend to stand for re-election when his mandate as a member of the ICRC Executive Board expires at the end of this year.

To succeed Dr Fuchs, the Assembly elected Paul Grossrieder as a member of the Executive Board and as ICRC Director of General Affairs. Mr Grossrieder currently holds the post of Deputy Director of Operations; he will take up his new duties on 1 January 1997.

The Executive Board is composed of seven members, including the institution’s three Directors (General Affairs, International Law and Policy, and Operations). The Board is responsible for the general conduct of ICRC affairs and meets once a week under the chairmanship of the President of the ICRC.

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