Press release No. 1809
28 April 1997

NEW ICRC MEMBERS

Geneva (ICRC) - The International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), meeting in Assembly on 24 April 1997, elected two new members, Mr Peter Arbenz and Professor Jakob Nüesch. This brings the membership of the Committee, which is made up entirely of Swiss citizens, to 21.

Mr Peter Arbenz was born in Winterthur in the canton of Zurich in 1937, and holds a degree in economics. He served as a member of the ICRC from 1983 to 1986, when he was appointed Swiss Federal Council Delegate for Refugee Affairs and Director of the Federal Office for Refugees. In 1993 Mr Arbenz became Adviser for Strategic and Enterprise Development. In his capacity as brigadier in the Swiss Army, he served as an inspector with UNPROFOR in the former Yugoslavia in 1994, and in 1996 was appointed personal adviser on Bosnia-Herzegovina to the Chairman-in-Office of the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE).

Mr Arbenz is chairman of the Zurich branch of the Swiss Red Cross.

His mandate as a member of the International Committee of the Red Cross will begin on 1 January 1998.

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Professor Jakob Nüesch was born in 1932 in Balgach in the canton of St Gallen, and holds a degree in agricultural engineering (1958) and a doctorate in technical sciences from the Federal Institute of Technology in Zurich (1960). In 1972 he was awarded a post-doctorate teaching degree in microbiology by the University of Basel and taught there as a lecturer, becoming Professor of Microbiology in 1978.

Since 1961, Mr Nüesch has worked for Ciba. Initially head of microbiological and biochemical research, he became a director of Ciba-Geigy in 1987 and has since been in charge of the biotechnology department and pharmaceutical research.

In 1990 the Swiss Federal Council nominated Professor Nüesch as President of the Federal Institute of Technology in Zurich.

His mandate as a member of the International Committee of the Red Cross will begin on 1 July 1997.

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Press release No. 1810
29 September 1997

PRESIDENT OF LITHUANIA VISITS ICRC

Geneva (ICRC) - The President of Lithuania, Mr Algirdas Mykolas Brazauskas, today visited the headquarters of the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), where he was received by President Comelio Sommaruga.

In his welcoming address, the ICRC President thanked the Government of Lithuania for its interest in humanitarian issues. He mentioned the responsibilities incumbent on Lithuania as a State party to the Geneva Conventions, in particular the dissemination of international humanitarian law, the adoption of legislative measures necessary for implementing the law, and the duty to ensure respect for its provisions in countries in conflict by backing the work of international bodies. Mr Sommaruga pointed out that ICRC activities depended largely on the goodwill and support of States, and went on to stress the importance of cooperation with the Lithuanian Red Cross to help the Society develop its operational capacity throughout the country.

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

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PRESS RELEASE

Press release No. 1811
1 November 1997

ALBANIAN PRESIDENT VISITS ICRC

Geneva (ICRC) - The President of the Republic of Albania, Mr Rexhep Meidani, today visited the headquarters of the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), where he was received by ICRC President Comelio Sommaruga.

President Meidani was accompanied by Mr Andi Gjonej, the country's ambassador to the United Nations and other international organizations in Geneva, and Ms Arta Dade, Minister of Culture, Youth and Sport. Also present was Mr George Weber, Secretary General of the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies.

In his welcoming remarks, Mr Sommaruga thanked the Albanian authorities for their active support for the humanitarian work of the ICRC and the Albanian Red Cross, and outlined the ICRC's future role in the country now that stability has begun to return.

In reply, President Meidani thanked the ICRC and the entire Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement for all that it had done to meet the needs of particularly vulnerable Albanians during the recent difficulties in his country. He looked forward to continued cooperation in the future.

The ICRC has been active in Albania since unrest erupted there in March this year. Working closely with the Albanian Red Cross, its delegates have furnished medical and social welfare facilities with emergency food and medical supplies and distributed over 210,000 food and hygiene parcels to particularly needy families. The International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies has also taken part in the operation, with the specific task of supporting the development of the Albanian Red Cross.

The ICRC is scaling down its activities as normality returns to Albania. The organization will now focus on promoting compliance with international humanitarian law and pursuing its programme to alert young people to the danger of handling firearms. In addition, it recently concluded an agreement with the Albanian authorities under which it will visit detainees.

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INTERNATIONAL COMMITTEE OF THE RED CROSS
PRESS RELEASE

Press release No. 1812
10 November 1997

HUNGARIAN PRESIDENT VISITS ICRC

Geneva (ICRC) - The President of the Republic of Hungary, Mr Arpád Göncz, today visited the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), where he was received by ICRC President Comelio Sommaruga.

In his welcoming address, Mr Sommaruga mentioned several historic events which have marked the ICRC's presence in Hungary, in particular the outstanding work of delegate Friedrich Born who saved thousands of Jews from deportation in 1944. He went on to outline the role of the ICRC's new regional delegation in Budapest, which officially opened in March this year, and thanked the Hungarian authorities for their support for the ICRC's activities.

President Sommaruga also voiced his appreciation for Hungary's ongoing efforts to promote international humanitarian law, and commended the Hungarian government's adhesion to the Ottawa process aimed at prohibiting anti-personnel landmines.

In his reply, President Göncz expressed his gratitude for the important role played by the ICRC in alleviating the suffering of Hungarians over the years and pledged his country's support for ICRC activities in the future. He also reasserted Hungary's commitment to banning anti-personnel mines.

Mr George Weber, Secretary General of the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, was also present during the visit.

The ICRC's regional delegation in Budapest covers the countries of Central and South-Eastern Europe. Its activities include spreading knowledge of international humanitarian law, in particular among the armed forces, and providing support for the region's National Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies.

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Press release No. 1813
Geneva, 16 December 1997

ICRC ELECTS NEW VICE-PRESIDENT

Geneva (ICRC) - At its meeting of 12 December 1997, the Assembly of the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) elected Ms Anne Petitpierre to the post of Vice-President for a four-year term. She will replace Mr Pierre Keller, who is retiring from the Committee. Together with Mr Keller, Mr Max Daetwyler and Mr Josef Feldmann have been appointed Honorary Members of the ICRC, in recognition of services rendered as members of the Committee.

Ms Petitpierre is a professor at the Faculty of Law of Geneva University. She holds a doctorate in law as well as degrees from the School of Translation and Interpretation and the Graduate Institute of International Studies, both in Geneva. She has been a member of the Geneva Bar since 1970 and has carried out extensive academic research within the Faculty of Law. She is the author of many publications in the legal field and has made a significant contribution to a number of expert gatherings. Ms Petitpierre was also a deputy in Geneva's Grand Conseil (cantonal parliament) from 1977 to 1985. Between 1978 and 1985 she was a member of the Swiss Committee of the World Wildlife Fund, which she chaired for six of those years. Ms Petitpierre was elected member of the International Committee of the Red Cross in 1987 and member of the Executive Board in 1989.