



daily bulletin

issue 3 - Geneva, 3 December 2003

Council of Delegates stresses values of IHL

The Council of Delegates today issued an appeal for increased efforts to promote the universal values of international humanitarian law as a means of advancing the cause of peace and greater understanding between nations.

In doing so the Council adopted a resolution aimed at increasing respect for diversity and strengthening the fight against discrimination and intolerance which remain endemic problems in many parts of the world. The Council acknowledged that such barriers jeopardized the efforts of civil society and governments to build prosperous and sustainable communities in which people can live and work together free from fear and want.

Council of Delegates reaffirmed the commitment of all components of the Movement to strengthen the application of the Fundamental Principles and the promotion of humanitarian values across religious, political and ethnic lines. The Council requested the different compo-



Mrs Fernanda Teixeira,
Secretary General of the Mozambique Red Cross Society

nents of the Movement, in conformity with their respective mandates, to work at the local, national and international levels to promote respect for diversity as part of the fight against discrimination and intolerance.

It was stressed that peace largely depended on the ability of nations, communities and individuals to live together, respecting one another regardless of differences in a spirit of equality and dignity.

Mrs Fernanda Teixeira, Secretary General of the Mozambique Red Cross Society

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and rapporteur for the Council Commissions on this key topic, told delegates: "We need the courage to act at individual and collective levels. We have to lead by example". She pointed out that the universal values of the Movement were coming under increasing attack in a world racked by armed conflict and other situations of violence. "We must focus our efforts where we can make a difference", she said. She recom-

mended forging new alliances with like-minded bodies without compromising the Fundamental Principles of the Movement in order to strengthen the campaign against the scourges of exclusion and marginalization.

The Council also agreed that the staff of the various components of the Movement should reflect the diversity of the communities they serve. Furthermore, it urged the Movement to invest resources to understand emerging trends in communities which fuel discrimination, intolerance and lack of respect for diversity. ■

Action in favour of refugees and internally displaced persons



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In his opening remarks, Yves Sandoz, of the ICRC noted that the plight of tens of millions of people uprooted by conflict and disasters was of great concern to the Movement. In 2002, the ICRC carried out protection and assistance activities for more than five million displaced people world-wide. During the same year the Federation raised 18.5 million Swiss francs, specifically for population movement programmes. According to a recent survey

conducted by the Federation, some 137 National Societies work with refugees and displaced people.

But also of concern to the Movement is the danger that its Fundamental principles be jeopardized when a component of

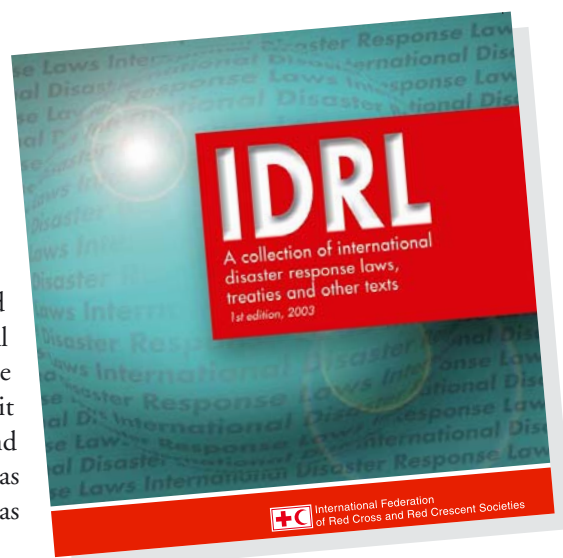
the Movement becomes an implementing partner in an operation set up with an external organization, whether from the United Nations or a national or international NGO. The resolution, which was adopted, calls for continued action in favour of refugees and displaced persons and includes a document entitled "Minimum Elements to be included in Operational Agreements between Movement Components and their External Operational Partners". This annex contains a set of rules and recommendations to ensure adherence to Movement principles and policies as well as correct usage of the emblem. Ensuing comments covered the importance of restoring family links and fighting the xenophobia to which migrants are often subjected. Other comments included a reminder that refugees and migrants have equal rights all over the world, and that forced migrations often have an effect not just on one country, but often on an entire region. The resolution was adopted with a small amendment, making specific reference to work with the UNHCR. ■

International Disaster Response Laws

Stephen Davey, of the International Federation, presented the project report on International Disaster Response Laws (IDRL), which highlights key findings from the work conducted on this issue over the past year, as well as a set of recommendations which will be presented for adoption by the 28th International Conference. Davey pointed out that the work on IDRL was important and timely. "We need to know the existing law better and we need to use and implement it better," he said. This would mean better and quicker access to disaster victims as well as better coordination and implementation of quality standards for

humanitarian assistance. He went on to ask National Societies to lobby their governments to encourage ratification of the 1998 Tampere Convention on the Provision of Telecommunications Resources for Disaster Mitigation and Relief Operations.

Among the recommendations included in the report are a better international understanding and definition of the term, as well as of the scope of what it covers. The continued development and promotion of IDRL was also identified as a key recommendation. The report was adopted by the Council. ■



Explosive Remnants of War and Landmines

In the ICRC presentation on this issue, Mr Yves Sandoz reviewed existing laws and treaties and drew attention to the fact this was a strategic time, since the first review conference of the Ottawa Convention (on the Prohibition of Anti-Personnel Mines) was scheduled for 2004 and the first deadlines for mine clearance were coming up in 2009.

Therefore, he said, this was the time to mobilize all members and staff of the Movement, civil society, the media and governments to ensure the implementation of the Ottawa Convention.

He noted that significant progress had been made on the issue of the threat to civilian populations from other explosive remnants of war, an issue which has received far less attention from the international community than that of anti-personnel mines. In the framework of the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons (CCW), following negotiations begun in March 2003, a fifth protocol on other explosive remnants of war was adopted last week. He encouraged the Movement to continue lobbying to encourage States party to the CCW to adhere to the new Protocol. The resolution presented to,



Yoshi Shimizu/Federation

and adopted by, the Council of Delegates extends the Movement Strategy on Landmines through 2009 and extends it to cover all explosive remnants of war.

The Movement, he said had been playing a crucial role in global efforts to end the human suffering caused by landmines, providing victims with medical care and physical rehabilitation.

Mr. Sandoz pointed to successes: "The number of new victims of land mines has decreased by two-thirds, and some 30 million mines have been destroyed." But there is still much work to do with too many people killed every day by mines and other explosive remnants of war. The ICRC has also called for a prohibition on the use of cluster bombs and other submunitions in or near civilian areas, he said. ■

Participation of Red Cross Red Crescent workers in IHL violation proceedings

The ICRC has prepared a report on developments in this area over the last two years. Most notably, the ICRC reported that it has succeeded in having the rules of the International Criminal Court changed to allow the ICRC to withhold testimony or other evidence if it so chooses. The ICRC also continues to negotiate agreements with individual states to grant its employees judi-

cial and testimonial immunity. To develop awareness for the rationale behind immunity and the importance of confidentiality, the ICRC has developed training materials. The Federation has also adapted its Code of Conduct to ensure that should a staff member of either the Secretariat or a National Society be requested to testify, the Secretariat be informed immediately so that it may provide advice.

The report concluded that all components of the Movement will continue to work collaboratively to promote awareness, internally and with appropriate authorities, of the potential risk to humanitarian activities if these critical issues are not understood. There was no discussion or commentary on the report. ■

Cultural property

When it was adopted in 2001, Resolution 11 "Protection of Cultural Property in the Event of Armed Conflict" provided a formal, specific framework for action on an issue that has increasingly been of concern to the public.

In speaking to a follow up report prepared by the British Red Cross, ICRC member Liselotte Kraus-Gurny stressed the importance of universal participation in the 1954 Hague Convention and its Protocols, and the intrinsic value of cultural items as part of the world's historical legacy. While protection of civilian populations will always be the priority, she explained that destruction of cultural property plays a catalyzing role, often contributing to increased hostility.

A report on this resolution reveals much work has been done to increase ratification of the relevant treaties. In recent years the ICRC has undertaken educational seminars in Southern Africa

and Latin America, and produced a practical guide for protecting cultural property. National Societies have also made efforts, including the topic in IHL training, advocating with governments and promoting awareness of the cultural property emblem, the blue and white shield. One has even successfully promoted the inclusion of protection of cultural property in its country's new National Disaster Policy.

However, Kraus-Gurny said much work remains to be done. Next year will mark the 50th anniversary of the Hague Convention. The ICRC and the British Red Cross are encouraging the National Societies to commit themselves to using this as a springboard for increasing the promotion of cultural property protection during both armed conflict and in disaster events. To this end, the British Red Cross has initiated a collective pledge that they hope will be co-sponsored by a majority of National Societies and their governments. ■

Closing and next venue

The last item on the agenda was the venue for the next Council of Delegates, which is scheduled for 2005. Federation Secretary General Markku Niskala pointed out that the Federation had accepted the invitation from the Republic of Korea Red Cross to hold its next General Assembly in Seoul and that probable dates would be between 5 and 20 November. The Council then agreed that its next meeting would convene in Korea and thanked the Korean Red Cross for its invitation.

Before officially closing the Council deliberations, ICRC President Jakob Kellenberger thanked the participants and said he believed the Movement was now well-prepared for the International Conference, with strong, clear and well-consolidated positions. ■



Chris Black/Federation



Since the launch **175** people have signed up to FedNet.

Delegates are kindly requested to empty their pigeon holes on a daily basis.

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