



# CHILDREN AFFECTED BY ARMED CONFLICT

## The Movement's role in humanitarian mobilization

### I. THE MOVEMENT'S PLAN OF ACTION

ENDORSED BY THE COUNCIL OF DELEGATES, GENEVA, 1995

#### REVIEW OF COMMITMENTS AND OBJECTIVES

##### Commitments:

1. To promote the principle of non-recruitment and non-participation in armed conflicts of children under 18 years of age;
2. To take specific steps to protect and assist child victims of armed conflict.

Six objectives have been set as a means of implementing these commitments.

#### Three of these objectives are aimed at prohibiting recruitment and participation of children below the age of 18 years in armed conflicts:

- to promote national and international legal standards (i.e., The Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child) which prohibit the recruitment in the armed forces and armed groups and the participation in hostilities of individuals under 18 years of age and the recognition and application of these standards by all armed groups (governmental and non-governmental);
- to discourage children from joining the armed forces or armed groups by offering them choices other than enlistment;
- to persuade the general public of the need to ensure that children are not allowed to join the armed forces or armed groups.

#### The remaining three goals relate to the Movement's commitment to implementing specific measures to protect and assist child victims of armed conflict:

- to meet the psychological as well as physical needs of children living with their families;
- to meet with the psychological as well as physical needs of unaccompanied children
- to facilitate the reintegration into their communities and normal environment of children who have participated in armed conflicts

In addition to these commitments, there are certain criteria and conditions that should be included in an international instrument such as the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child.

Therefore, should an Optional Protocol be adopted, it should meet the following requirements:

- 1. It should also be applicable to non-governmental forces.**
- 2. It should prohibit all direct or indirect participation of children under 18 years of age in armed conflicts.**
- 3. The minimum age of recruitment (on a voluntary or compulsory basis) should be set at 18 years.**
- 4. The Optional Protocol should be applicable to situations of both international and non-international armed conflict.**

The last Council of Delegates reaffirmed its previous resolutions by appealing to

All National Societies to promote the Movement's position on the 18 year age limit for recruitment and participation in hostilities, with a view to encouraging their respective governments to adopt national legislation and recruitment procedures in line with this position.

(Resolution 8.1.5., 1997 Council of Delegates)

## **II.A FEW EXAMPLES OF MEASURES TAKEN TO DATE:**

### On the international level

- Statements made in the framework of the United Nations General Assembly, the United Nations Working Group entrusted with the task of drawing up a draft Optional Rights to the Convention on the Rights of the Child and the Commission on Human Rights (ICRC and International Federation).
- The ICRC's position paper on the Optional Protocol.

### On the regional level

- Joint representations made to their respective governments by the National Societies of the Nordic and Baltic countries.

### On the national level

- Nationwide campaigns (e.g., Spanish, German, Colombian and Netherlands Red Cross).
- Representation made to their governments (e.g., Netherlands and Danish Red Cross).