

Legal Division

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II. PRINCIPLES AND LAW

Legal Division

IMPLEMENTATION AND DEVELOPMENT OF INTERNATIONAL HUMANITARIAN LAW

GENEVA CONVENTIONS

New accessions.—In 1970, three new States formally became parties to the 1949 Geneva Conventions. They were the Yemen Arab Republic (accession, 16 July 1970, with effect from 16 January 1971), the Republic of Chad (accession, 5 August 1970, with effect from 5 February 1971), and Mauritius (declaration of continuity, 18 August 1970, with effect from 12 March 1968). The dates shown are those on which the official deeds of participation were received by the Swiss federal authorities.

Thus, at the end of 1970 the number of States explicitly bound by the four Geneva Conventions of 12 August 1949 was 128.

Dissemination.—In the world today, with the endemic conflict and trouble which cause so many victims, it is essential that the spirit rather than the letter of the 1949 Geneva Conventions should be promoted. While the situations created by events do not always come within the original legal setting, the victims are the very people whom the Conventions propose to help. The ICRC is thus acting at a twofold level: at governmental level it endeavours by means of special agreements to ensure implementation of texts which in theory apply to different legal situations, while at other levels it encourages a general distribution of simplified texts frequently accompanied by illustrations. An overall description of the ICRC's activities is given in the chapter on the Documentation and Dissemination Division.

On 15 June 1970, the ICRC sent Latin American countries a circular letter reading as follows:

" Following the conflict which broke out on 14 July 1969 between Honduras and El Salvador, the delegates of the International Committee of the Red Cross

successfully intervened to arrange repatriation of prisoners of war and interned civilians detained by each of the Parties to the conflict. These operations were completed on 6 October 1969 when the last Honduran civilians detained in El Salvador were repatriated.

Such events give new impetus to interest in the ever present problem of disseminating knowledge of the Geneva Conventions of 12 August 1949 for the protection of victims of war.

True, direct conflict between States Parties to these Conventions is unusual, but there can nevertheless be a number of related situations which, although of less importance and on a lesser scale, call for the application of certain provisions of humanitarian law. Those situations are a cause of concern to the International Committee of the Red Cross which is convinced that, to meet them, the best safeguard is the dissemination of knowledge of the Geneva Conventions of 1949.

On the grounds of the right of initiative conferred on it by articles 9 (or 10) common to the four Geneva Conventions and by its long tradition, the ICRC has the honour to submit some proposals to the authorities concerned in Latin American States which are Parties to those Conventions.

In all countries, the problem of disseminating knowledge of the Geneva Conventions is twofold: basic instruction in schools to young people and the population in general on the one hand, and practical instruction on conduct in certain situations in the event of operations by armed forces on the other hand.

In the first case, namely basic instruction, the Fourth Meeting of Presidents of National Red Cross Societies of North America, Mexico, Central America and Panama, which met in Mexico from 18 to 22 November 1969, adopted a number of resolutions with which the International Committee fully associates and which it recommends to the attention of the authorities concerned. The same applies to like resolutions adopted by other Red Cross Conferences. They were concerned essentially with the introduction into school programmes, and into programmes of military instruction, of courses on the history and fundamental principles of the Red Cross and on the 1949 Geneva Conventions.

Concurrently with that basic effort, the International Committee would suggest as another practical measure the issue to each soldier in the field of a booklet summarizing the essential rights and obligations arising from accession to the 1949 Geneva Conventions. At the same time the soldiers should be given appropriate explanations. If deemed expedient, a coloured illustrated booklet could replace the printed text which might be issued to officers only. In each case suitable explanations could also be given.

In regions as large as the American continent the soldier in the field may often be considered the authorities' sole representative in the most forward position, confronted by a mission calling for application of the humanitarian principles. The International Committee is of that opinion, but it has no power to decide in place of the authorities, nor should it undertake a task which is beyond it.

It has however prepared documentary material which it makes available to all Parties to the 1949 Geneva Conventions with a view, in particular, to the application of the essential provisions of article 144 of the Fourth Convention relating to dissemination, and which reads as follows:

'The High Contracting Parties undertake, in time of peace as in time of war, to disseminate the text of the present Convention as widely as possible in their respective countries, and, in particular, to include the study thereof in their

programmes of military and, if possible, civil instruction, so that the principles thereof may become known to the entire population.

Any civilian, military, police or other authorities, who in time of war assume responsibilities in respect of protected persons, must possess the text of the Convention and be specially instructed as to its provisions.'

The International Committee expresses beforehand its thanks for all replies which are sent to it. It will not fail to contact the authorities concerned to convey to them the result of this first consultation."

A number of governments immediately put the International Committee's proposals into effect.

As regards ICRC publications, it is worth mentioning that a revised Spanish edition of the 1949 Conventions has been re-published, with the co-operation of the Spanish Red Cross. We might also mention a booklet by Mr. K. Ereksoussi entitled " The Koran and the Humanitarian Conventions ", which was published in 1969.

CONTRIBUTION TO WORLD RED CROSS DAY

The Legal Division participated in preparations for World Red Cross Day¹, the theme of which, in 1970, was " Protect Man—Thwart War ". The documents sent to all National Societies on that occasion (D 1120b) included the following articles of general information :

- (a) The XXIst International Conference of the Red Cross.
- (b) New Development Trends in Humanitarian Law.
- (c) The Red Cross Contribution to the Framing of International Humanitarian Law.
- (d) The Red Cross and the Protection of Civilian Populations against Hostilities.
- (e) The Red Cross and Non-International Conflicts.
- (f) Knowledge of the Geneva Conventions.
- (g) The Individual and Humanitarian Law.
- (h) The Red Cross and Bacteriological and Chemical Weapons.
- (i) The Red Cross and Peace.

A number of these articles were printed in the bulletins and publications of many National Societies, either in full or in part.

¹ See page 103 of this Report.

REAFFIRMATION AND DEVELOPMENT OF INTERNATIONAL HUMANITARIAN LAW APPLICABLE IN ARMED CONFLICTS

In its previous annual report, the ICRC referred to several resolutions adopted by the XXIst International Conference of the Red Cross (Istanbul, 1969). Resolution XIII was the main basis of the ICRC's work to reaffirm and develop international humanitarian law. This resolution comprises two essential elements :

- fully confirming the ICRC's views, it " underlines the necessity and the urgency of reaffirming and developing humanitarian rules of international law applicable in armed conflicts of all kinds, in order to strengthen the effective protection of the fundamental rights of human beings, in keeping with the Geneva Conventions of 1949 " ;
- it outlines a precise programme for subsequent ICRC studies. Thus it " requests the ICRC, on the basis of its report ¹, to pursue actively its efforts in this regard with a view to :
 - (1) proposing, as soon as possible, concrete rules which would supplement the existing humanitarian law ;
 - (2) inviting governmental, Red Cross and other experts representing the principal legal and social systems in the world to meet for consultations with the ICRC on these proposals ;
 - (3) submitting such proposals to Governments for their comments, and,
 - (4) if it is deemed desirable, recommending the appropriate authorities to convene one or more diplomatic conferences of States parties to the Geneva Conventions and other interested States, in order to elaborate international legal instruments incorporating those proposals."

Five further resolutions of the same Conference (XIV to XVIII) assigned to the ICRC specific tasks to supplement and strengthen the general mandate embodied in resolution XIII. An important point to be borne in mind is that three of the resolutions (XIII, XV and XVI) requested the ICRC to prepare and put forward to a meeting of experts

¹ The report is entitled " Reaffirmation and Development of International Humanitarian Law Applicable in Armed Conflicts " (DS 4, a, b, e) submitted by the ICRC to the XXIst International Conference of the Red Cross.

concrete proposals for rules. Thus the Istanbul Conference clearly showed that it intended to leave the stage of mere study for that of formulated drafts for rules. The ICRC was guided by that basic idea when it prepared the documentation for the Conference of Government Experts scheduled to be held in May 1971.

ICRC ACTIVITIES SINCE THE ISTANBUL CONFERENCE

Consultations with experts

In drawing up the concrete proposals for rules which it had been asked to prepare, the ICRC decided to obtain expert advice and to consult individually and privately a number of authorities—altogether about fifty—from the principal regions of the world. Most of them were consulted in writing or in the course of meetings held in their own country. Some consultations were held at ICRC headquarters.

The consultations dealt with the following three points :

1. *Non-international conflicts and guerrilla warfare* : The ICRC consulted the persons listed below, in alphabetical order, by means of an extensive questionnaire :

Dr. M. Belaouane, President of the Algerian Red Crescent Society, Algiers ; Professor I. Blishchenko, Moscow ; Mr. S. Dabrowa, Legal Adviser, Warsaw ; Major T. Dale, President of the Norwegian Red Cross, Oslo ; Colonel G. I. A. D. Draper, London ; Professor Duncanson, Canterbury, Great Britain ; World Veterans' Federation (WVF), Paris ; Mr. H. Ford, President of the Panamanian Red Cross, Panama City ; Mr. E. García-Sayán, President of the Peruvian Red Cross, Lima ; Professor G. Herzegh, Budapest ; Professor F. Kalshoven, Leyden ; Judge Keba M'Baye, Dakar ; Colonel I. Krasnopeev, Leningrad ; Mr. Sean MacBride, Secretary-General of the International Commission of Jurists, Dublin and Geneva ; Mr. Henri Meyrowitz, Lawyer, Paris ; Mr. J. Murumbi, Nairobi ; Dr. C. Rossell, President of the Bolivian Red Cross, La Paz ; Professor M. Sahovic, Belgrade ; Mr. A. Schlögel, Secretary-General of the German Red Cross in the Federal Republic of Germany, Bonn ; Colonel J. M. Simpson, Ottawa ; Professor N. Singh, New Delhi ; Mr. P. Villetorte,

Secretary-General of the International Federation of Senior Police Officers, Paris, and Lieutenant-Colonel J. P. Wolfe, Ottawa.

Moreover, in the case of a number of States involved in conflicts, the ICRC managed to ascertain through its delegates the private and unofficial views of public figures, by means of the questionnaires. This procedure made it possible to secure opinions at Algiers (from representatives of movements fighting the Portuguese authorities in southern Africa); at Amman (from representatives of Palestinian movements), and at Lisbon, Cairo, Phnom-Penh and Tel Aviv.

In the context of its co-operation with the United Nations¹ and bearing in mind the programme of work of the United Nations Secretariat and, more particularly, that of the Human Rights Division, the ICRC decided to give priority to consultations on non-international conflicts and guerrilla warfare, so as to be in a position to draw up a preliminary report² which it submitted to the Secretary-General of the United Nations at the beginning of August 1970.

2. *Protection of civilians against the dangers of hostilities*: This problem, which had long been a matter of active concern for the ICRC, also gave rise to a series of private and personal consultations with a number of persons who expressed their views in a "Questionnaire on the Protection of the Civilian Population against the Dangers of Hostilities". They were:

Mr. W. Bargatzky, President of the German Red Cross in the Federal Republic of Germany, Bonn; General A. Beaufre, Paris; Professor I. Blishchenko, Moscow; Colonel K. Brunner, Berne; Major-General Odd Bull, Oslo; Professor E. Castren, Helsinki; Lieutenant-General Chatterjee, New Delhi; Colonel G. I. A. D. Draper, London; Professor F. Feliciano, Manila and New York; Professor L. S. Green, Canada; Professor F. Kalshoven, Leyden; Colonel I. Krasnopeev, Moscow; Professor W. Ludwig, President of the German Red Cross in the German Democratic Republic, Dresden; H. E. Minister E. Makonnen, Addis Ababa; Colonel T. Malik, Warsaw; Mr. R. Neidl of the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute

¹ See page 95 of this Report.

² Preliminary report on consultations with experts regarding non-international conflicts and guerrilla warfare (D 1153 b), Geneva, July 1970.

(SIPRI), Stockholm; Lieutenant-General van Rollegem, Brussels; Professor M. Sahović, Belgrade; Professor N. Singh, New Delhi, and Professor Y. Takano, Tokyo.

3. *Protection of the wounded and the sick* : While it is not proposed to describe the century-old concern of the Red Cross, and of the ICRC in particular, about the wounded and the sick, or in fact the efforts made since 1949, it should be mentioned that, following the XXIst International Conference of the Red Cross (Istanbul 1969), the ICRC has taken three important steps in this field :

- the dispatch, in February 1970, to all Governments of States parties to the Geneva Conventions of a questionnaire on Istanbul resolution XVI (" Protection of Civilian Medical and Nursing Personnel "), to which more than 71 Governments have replied ;
- the holding, at ICRC headquarters in Geneva, of three " Symposia on International Medical Law " (the twelfth in 1969, and the thirteenth and fourteenth in 1970), attended by representatives of the World Medical Association, the International Committee of Military Medicine and Pharmacy, and, with observer status, the World Health Organization, the League of Red Cross Societies, the International Law Association, the *Commission médico-juridique de Monaco*, and the International Committee for Neutrality in Medicine ;
- and, lastly, the convening, again in Geneva, of an experts' meeting on the safety and identification of medical transport, which was held on 28 and 29 October 1970, under the chairmanship of General E. Evrard. The experts consulted are listed below, in alphabetical order :

Mr. A. Blanc, International Electrotechnical Commission ; Mr. H. Bosly, Director of the *Revue internationale de droit pénal militaire et de droit de la guerre* ; Mr. J. Danton, Engineer ; Mr. Ph. Eberlin, former convoying officer for ICRC ships ; Mr. K. Emanuelson, Swedish Board of Civil Aviation, Expert of the International Electrotechnical Commission ; Major-General Dr. E. Evrard, of the *Commission médico-juridique de Monaco* ; Mr. R. Grosclaude, Head of Administration for Maritime Affairs, Inter-Governmental Maritime Consultative Organization ; *Captaine de corvette* Guillot, *Section d'Etude et de Coordination*

S.A.R. ; Mr. R. Kay, International Electrotechnical Commission ; Mr. A. Munch, Deputy Director, *Office fédéral de l'Air*, Berne ; Professor P. de la Pradelle, Vice-President of the *Commission médico-juridique de Monaco* ; Mr. J. Queguinier, Head of Administration for Maritime Affairs ; Mr. C. J. Stanford, Secretary-General, International Electrotechnical Commission ; Mr. Th. Wettstein, Head of Department, Specialized Secretariat of the International Frequency Registration Board, International Telecommunication Union ; Group Captain T. H. Whiteside, R.A.F. Physician, Institute of Aviation Medicine.

Relations with the United Nations

On 16 December 1969, the United Nations General Assembly adopted resolution 2597 (XXIV) on respect for human rights in armed conflicts, requesting the Secretary-General " to consult and co-operate closely with the International Committee of the Red Cross in regard to the studies being undertaken by that body on this question ".

In the context of this co-operation, as mentioned above, the ICRC was to give some priority to consultations on problems arising from the application of humanitarian law in non-international armed conflicts and guerrilla warfare, and to send the Secretary-General early in August 1970 a " Preliminary Report on the Consultation of Experts concerning Non-International Conflict and Guerrilla Warfare " (D 1153 b). On that document the Secretary-General largely based his report on agenda item 47 (" Respect for Human Rights in Armed Conflicts ", A/8052, 18 September 1970). The ICRC supported the efforts of the Secretary-General of the United Nations by delegating Mr. René-Jean Wilhelm, Assistant Director of the ICRC, to a meeting of experts at United Nations headquarters in New York.

The discussion of agenda item 47 at the twenty-fifth session was followed by Mr. Claude Pilloud, Director of the ICRC, and Mr. André-Dominique Micheli, ICRC Delegate to the International Organizations. On 2 October 1970, Mr. Marcel A. Naville, President of the ICRC, wrote to U Thant, Secretary-General of the United Nations, setting forth the ICRC's programme of work for 1971 in the field of international

humanitarian law ¹ and, in particular, stating his intention to convene a conference of government experts.

Among the various resolutions on item 47 adopted by the twenty-fifth United Nations General Assembly was one which emphasized " the importance of continued close collaboration between the United Nations and the International Committee of the Red Cross " (A/Res/2677 (XXV)) and requested the Secretary-General " to transmit his reports and the comments of Governments thereon, together with the records of relevant discussions and resolutions of the General Assembly, the Economic and Social Council and the Commission on Human Rights, to the International Committee of the Red Cross for consideration, as appropriate, by the conference of government experts ", and " to present the comments received to the General Assembly at its twenty-sixth session and to report at that session on the results of the conference of government experts to be convened by the International Committee of the Red Cross and on any other relevant developments ".

Relations with non-governmental organizations

The ICRC also has reason to feel gratified regarding the excellent co-operation established with a number of non-governmental organizations in the reaffirmation and development of humanitarian law.

Istanbul resolution XIII encouraged the ICRC to co-operate, in addition to the United Nations, " with all other official and private organizations with a view to ensuring the co-ordination of such studies ". In 1970, the ICRC therefore participated in the following conferences and meetings: Conference on " Humanitarian Law and Armed Conflicts ", organized by the *Centre de droit international de l'Université libre de Bruxelles* (Institute of Sociology), from 28 to 30 January (the ICRC was represented by Mr. René-Jean Wilhelm, Assistant Director, and Mr. Michel Veuthey, Legal Adviser); the Fifth International Congress of the International Society for Military Law and Law of War, held in Dublin from 25 to 30 May (Mr. Claude Pilloud, Director of the Department of Principles and Law); the

¹ The text of this letter, a copy of which was sent to the permanent missions in New York for their information, was reproduced in " The ICRC in Action, Information Notes " No. 151 b (6 November 1970), pages 12 and 13.

54th Conference of the International Law Association, held at The Hague from 23 to 29 August (Mr. Frédéric Siordet, honorary member of the ICRC), and the International Conference on Humanitarian Law, organized by the International Institute of Humanitarian Law at San Remo, from 24 to 27 September (Mr. Siordet). In addition to the meetings mentioned above, regular contacts were established or continued with a number of other non-governmental organizations.

Lastly, the ICRC regularly attended, with observer status, meetings of the NGO Committee on Disarmament and the NGO Committee on Human Rights. Mr. Claude Pilloud, Director, and Mr. Jean Mirimanoff-Chilikine, Legal Adviser, represented the ICRC and the League. The ICRC was also represented by the League of Red Cross Societies at the meeting of the NGO Committee on Development. Moreover, some associations and organizations particularly concerned with international humanitarian law will be invited to send a representative to a meeting which is to be held in 1971 at a date yet to be fixed.

Relations with National Red Cross Societies

The ICRC cannot fail to stress the invaluable co-operation it has received from the National Red Cross, Red Crescent and Red Lion and Sun Societies, as well as from the League of Red Cross Societies.

National Societies have made an important contribution to the reaffirmation and development of international humanitarian law, whether in the organization of World Red Cross Day, in expert consultations (frequently organized or facilitated by National Societies) or in regular contacts.

In order to associate the Red Cross world more closely with this undertaking, the ICRC, in its Circular 478 ¹, informed National Societies of a meeting on international humanitarian law at which they might exchange views among themselves and with the ICRC. Owing to the largely favourable reaction, the ICRC in its Circular 481 ² called upon

¹ Circular 478. Development of international humanitarian law. Geneva, 15 April 1970.

² Circular 481. Conference of Red Cross Experts on the Reaffirmation and Development of International Humanitarian Law Applicable in Armed Conflicts. Geneva, 28 October 1970.

all National Societies who wished to do so to take part in a “ Conference of Red Cross Experts on the Reaffirmation and Development of International Humanitarian Law Applicable in Armed Conflicts ”, to be held at The Hague from 1 to 6 March 1971.

Preparation of 1971 Conference of Government Experts

Pursuant to resolution XIII¹ adopted by the XXIst International Conference of the Red Cross, the ICRC wrote on 22 October 1970 to thirty-nine Governments inviting them to take part in the Conference of Government Experts on the Reaffirmation and Development of International Humanitarian Law scheduled to be held from 24 May to 12 June 1971.

In its letter, the ICRC stated, *inter alia* :

“ In accordance with the above-mentioned resolution, which provides for a meeting of governmental experts representing the principal legal and social systems in the world, and taking into consideration the active interest which many Governments have shown so far in the efforts of the Red Cross in this field, the International Committee has drawn up a list of thirty-nine Governments (. . .) including your own Government. It has thus the honour of inviting your Government to delegate experts to this conference.

The International Committee also encloses a provisional list (. . .) of the subjects to be submitted to the conference. The latter could distribute the study of these among two or three commissions to be set up by the conference, in order that a thorough examination of each item should be more easily carried out. Should it turn out that not all the subjects are examined within the period decided upon, or that the study of some of them cannot be completed, a second session of the Conference of governmental experts could be held in the autumn of 1971.

In order to bring to a successful conclusion the task assigned to it by the said Resolution XIII, the International Committee, which, for over a hundred years, has exerted itself for the constant adaptation of international law to the new requirements of mankind, intends to have recourse to the well-tried methods it has followed in order to prepare the draft projects of the Geneva Conventions. Since the XXIst International Conference of the Red Cross, it has actively pursued its studies with a view to working out concrete proposals of rules in the fields under consideration. In particular, it has consulted, in their private capacity, a large number of experts from the principal regions of the world and it has taken part in most public and private meetings where discussions have taken place on connected questions.

On the basis of these consultations and of the information thus obtained, the International Committee is at present engaged in the preparation of relevant documentation on the whole of the problems mentioned. This documentation,

¹ See page 91 above.

together with concrete proposals, will be sent early next year to the Governments whose experts will participate in the conference.

In addition, the International Committee is keeping in close touch with the United Nations, and, in particular, with the Secretary-General, in accordance with the co-operation urged by the General Assembly in its resolution 2597 (XXIV). It is carefully following the proceedings of the twenty-fifth session of the General Assembly, especially with regard to item 47 on its agenda, concerning ' Respect of Human Rights in Time of Armed Conflicts '."

The thirty-nine Governments invited by the ICRC were the following :

Algeria, Argentina, Australia, Austria, Belgium, Brazil, Burma, Canada, People's Republic of China, Cuba, Ethiopia, Finland, France, German Democratic Republic, Germany (Fed. Rep. of), Hungary, India, Israel, Italy, Japan, Kenya, Mexico, Netherlands, Nigeria, Norway, Pakistan, Philippines, Poland, Rumania, Saudi Arabia, Senegal, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, United Arab Republic, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, United States of America, Yugoslavia.

The provisional list of subjects for discussion comprised :

- (1) *Measures intended to reinforce the implementation, in armed conflicts, of existing international humanitarian law* (Dissemination of humanitarian principles and rules, national legislation for their application and instructions to be given to the armed forces—reinforcement of rules relative to the supervision of the regular observance of existing law and to the sanction of violations—Protecting Powers and their substitutes—problem of reprisals).
- (2) *Strengthening of the protection of civilian populations against dangers of hostilities* (Reaffirmation of the immunity of the civilian population as such—distinction to be observed between non-military elements and military objectives in case of attacks—precautions to be taken as to fighting methods or the choice between different means of combat in order to spare the population—precautions to be taken by the authorities of the State to which it belongs—creation of zones or localities enjoying a particular status in view of their special protection—guarantees to be afforded to the personnel of non-military civil defence bodies).
- (3) *Humanitarian rules relative to behaviour between combatants* (Reaffirmation and determination of the rules limiting needless forms of suffering and prohibiting certain methods of warfare : treatment

of an enemy who surrenders—quarter—prohibited ruses—violation of protected emblems—problem of parachutists).

- (4) *Protection of victims of non-international armed conflicts* (Notion and qualification of non-international armed conflicts—effective observance and development of rules applicable in these conflicts and which concern the treatment of victims and the conduct of hostilities—possible extension of certain rules to situations of internal disturbances and tensions).
- (5) *Status of combatants and the problem of guerrilla warfare* (Possible definition and development of humanitarian rules with regard to the qualification of combatants, as well as the status and treatment of prisoners—rules relative to the conduct of hostilities in guerrilla warfare and duties incumbent upon parties to the conflict to spare the civilian population).
- (6) *Protection of the wounded and sick* (Strengthening of existing guarantees—protection and marking of civilian medical personnel—strengthening of the safety of civilian medical transports and the problem of marking them—extension of certain rules to non-international armed conflicts).

It should be noted that the indications between brackets under each chapter-heading were not exhaustive and were mentioned chiefly as examples. The order in which the subjects were listed did not mean that the International Committee of the Red Cross would suggest that the conference should examine those items in that same order.

OTHER ACTIVITIES

RECOGNITION OF NATIONAL SOCIETIES

In the course of 1970, the ICRC officially recognized the Botswana Red Cross Society, on 5 February, and the Malawi Red Cross, on 23 July. The number of officially recognized National Societies thus rose to 114.

RELATIONS WITH INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS

The UN and its Specialized Agencies : Mrs. Danièle Bujard, Legal Adviser to the ICRC, followed with observer status the proceedings of the thirteenth session of the Commission on the Status of Women, held at the European seat of the United Nations, Geneva, from 23 March to 10 April.

The agenda included (item 6) " Protection of Women and Children in Emergency or War-time, Fighting for Peace, National Liberation and Independence ". A number of delegations expressed a wish for a better application of the rules of humanitarian law at present in force, and largely favoured the establishment of new international instruments. A resolution was adopted calling upon States, *inter alia*, to fulfil all their obligations under the Geneva Conventions of 12 August 1949.

Mr. Claude Pilloud, Director, and Mr. Jean Mirimanoff-Chilikine, Legal Adviser, attended as observers the forty-ninth session of the Economic and Social Council, held in Geneva from 6 to 31 July. In particular, they followed the question of assistance in cases of natural disasters.

Non-governmental Organizations : Mr. Melchior Borsinger, Delegate-General for Europe and North America, represented the ICRC at the International Seminar on Mediation Techniques and International Control of Violence, held in Vienna from 22 August to 10 September, under the auspices of the International Peace Academy.

PROMOTION OF THE 1925 GENEVA PROTOCOL

Following the negotiations consistently conducted by the Committee since 1918, first to ban the use of gas in war, and subsequently for the accession of all States to the Geneva Protocol of 17 June 1925 for the prohibition of the use in war of asphyxiating, poisonous or other gases, and of bacteriological methods of warfare, on 25 June 1970 the President of the ICRC wrote to seventy-seven Governments. An extract from the letter is given below :

" Although the number of States expressly bound by the Protocol is now seventy, it should be noted that this figure is well below the number of States expressly bound by the Geneva Conventions of 1949, which, at present, is 125.

While sharing the consensus of opinion that the norms established by the Protocol represent the expression of common law and should constitute, con-

sequently, an imperative for all countries throughout the world, the International Committee believes that a formal accession by States which are not already Parties to the Protocol would strengthen the authority of the law and would undeniably serve as a valuable example. That is why it has been decided to appeal to the Governments of all States that are not yet Parties to this Protocol, and to request them to examine most carefully the possibility of their accession.

It is the earnest hope of the Committee that your Government will judge it possible to envisage favourably your country's formal accession to this Protocol, the instruments of which are deposited with the French Government."

After this appeal, the following States had acceded to the Geneva Protocol by 31 December 1970: Kenya, Ivory Coast, Jamaica, Central African Republic, Brazil, Malawi, Ecuador, Malta, Morocco, Panama, Dominican Republic, Malaysia, Trinidad and Tobago, Mauritius.

Other States communicated, either in writing or through the ICRC's regional delegates, that they would be considering the possibility of acceding at an early date. These were: Barbados, Cambodia, Colombia, Gabon, Jordan, Kuwait, Philippines, San Marino, People's Democratic Republic of Yemen.

Thus, according to the information obligingly confirmed by H.E. Ambassador Jean Fernand-Laurent, French Permanent Representative to the United Nations office at Geneva, by the end of 1970 the States parties to the Geneva Protocol numbered 84. It is worth noting that Japan had acceded to that important legal instrument, without any reservations, shortly before the President of the ICRC made his appeal.

Furthermore, through its regional delegations, the ICRC conveyed all the desired information to the Governments concerned and prepared for them specimen letters regarding accession or a declaration of continuity.

Documentation and Dissemination Division

DISSEMINATION OF PRINCIPLES AND CONVENTIONS

CAMPAIGN AMONG NATIONAL SOCIETIES

In accordance with the wishes expressed by the International Conferences of the Red Cross held at Vienna (1965) and Istanbul (1969), and by the Meeting of Heads of Information and Public Relations of