

**10th Conference of Red Cross  
and Red Crescent Societies of the Balkan countries**

*(Sofia, 29 September - 3 October 1993)*

This Conference usually takes place every two years. Its tenth session was held from 29 September to 3 October 1993 in Sofia, at the invitation of the Bulgarian Red Cross. The five-day meeting brought together representatives of the National Societies of Albania, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, Greece, the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Romania, Slovenia, Turkey and Yugoslavia, who discussed subjects of common interest, such as social services, disaster preparedness, international humanitarian law, assistance to refugees, tracing services, National Society development, the Plan of Action of the Strategy for the '90s, Red Cross Youth, and cooperation among National Societies of the Balkan countries.

The International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies was represented by its President, Mr. Mario Villarroel Lander, its acting Secretary General, Mr. George Weber, and the Head of its Europe Department, Mrs. Ilkka Uusitalo. The ICRC, for its part, had sent a delegation made up of Mr. Yves Sandoz, Director for Principles, Law and Relations with the Movement, Mr. Thierry Germond, Delegate General for Western and Central Europe and the Balkans, and Mr. Olivier Dürr, Head of the Division for Relations with the Movement.

At the end of the session, the participants adopted a final document and a declaration relative to the conflict situation in the region. The text of the declaration is as follows:

**DECLARATION BY RED CROSS AND RED CRESCENT SOCIETIES  
OF THE BALKAN COUNTRIES WITH REGARD TO  
THE CONFLICT SITUATION IN THE REGION**

Deeply distressed by the tragedy which continues to affect many parts of the former Yugoslavia, and Bosnia-Herzegovina in particular, we, leaders of the Red

Cross and Red Crescent Societies of the Balkan countries, assembled in Sofia for our 10th Conference, declare as follows:

*noting* that the civilian population continues to be the target and main object of the fighting and that the grim scenario of destruction, harassment, arbitrary detention and exodus is repeated throughout the conflict area, day after day, *alarmed* by the extent of needlessly cruel acts perpetrated by unscrupulous belligerents against innocent civilians such as children, women and the elderly, *concerned* that access to the victims is becoming increasingly difficult and that often the delivery of humanitarian aid is either hampered by military and political considerations or subject to unacceptable preconditions imposed by all the sides,

- *express* our determination to continue to cooperate with and support the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies and the ICRC in their humanitarian efforts to alleviate the plight of the affected civilian population, detainees, sick and wounded;
- *reaffirm* the commitment of Red Cross and Red Crescent volunteers to assist these victims in compliance with the Fundamental Principles, in particular those of humanity, impartiality and neutrality;
- *decide* to strengthen our mutual cooperation and, assisted by the whole International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement, to give our full support to the National Societies in conflict areas so as to render as effective as possible the humanitarian efforts of the Red Cross and Red Crescent for the victims of those conflicts;
- *urge* all the warring parties, out of humanitarian concern, to respect the undertakings they have made and in particular, in compliance with the rules of international humanitarian law, to allow assistance and protection to be given to the sick and wounded, to treat humanely persons they capture and combatants who surrender, to refrain from attacking and ill-treating the civilian population, and to respect the Red Cross and Red Crescent emblems;
- *ask* the belligerents to authorize and facilitate the work of the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement, and that of all other impartial humanitarian bodies, in behalf of the victims.

The Conference enabled the participating National Societies to strengthen the ties that unite them, to show their determination to help Societies directly affected by the conflict in the region and their support for the efforts undertaken by the ICRC and the Federation to alleviate the suffering of victims.