

The next Arab Conference will take place in Geneva in October 1989, just before the VIIth League General Assembly.

Mr. Jäckli, accompanied by Mr. Francis Junod, was received on 6 November by President Mubarak in the presence of the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs, Dr. Esmat Abdel Megid. Discussions essentially concerned the situation in Iran and Iraq, the Egyptian detainees in Iran and co-operation between the Egyptian Government and the ICRC.

Pan-African Conference of National Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (Dakar, 21-23 November 1988)

The Pan-African Conference of National Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies took place in Dakar from 21 to 23 November 1988 under the chairmanship of the President of the Senegalese Red Cross, Mrs. Siga Seye Coulibaly. It was attended by representatives of 40 African and 12 other National Societies, of the League and of the ICRC.

The ICRC delegation was composed of Mr. Cornelio Sommaruga, President; Mr. Yves Sandoz, Director of the Department of Principles, Law and Relations with the Movement; Mr. Thierry Germond, responsible for the regional delegations in Africa; Mr. Friedrich Steinemann, as future regional delegate in Lagos; and Mrs. Marguerite Contat, regional delegate in Lomé.

At the opening session, on 21 November, H. E. Abdou Diouf, President of the Republic of Senegal, praised the role of the Red Cross and Red Crescent in the development of the African continent, and stressed their contribution to peace. He called for a humanitarian mobilization and for preservation of the non-political character of humanitarian action. The President of the League of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, Mr. Mario Villarroel, spoke of the League's role in promoting the activities of the National Societies, and Mr. Cornelio Sommaruga made a vigorous appeal to African States which are not yet party to the 1977 Protocols to ratify them without delay. League General Secretary, Mr. Pär Stenbäck, expressing his strong feelings on the issue of development, called for new measures to bridge the gap between rich and poor National Societies.

The participants then divided into three commissions: the first on “international humanitarian law and African traditions”, the second on “emergency relief and development aid”, and the third on National Society co-operation.

Among the resolutions passed, it is worth mentioning that the Pan-African Conference expressed its appreciation of the efforts made by the ICRC to disseminate knowledge of international humanitarian law and endorsed the idea of a study of international humanitarian law and African traditions under the auspices of a number of African universities and with the support of the ICRC. One resolution expressed the emotion felt by the Conference and its solidarity with the ICRC in respect of the abduction of a delegate in Lebanon.

The Conference also requested that priority be given to regional and sub-regional co-operation in disaster preparedness and prevention, and that more emphasis be placed on issues regarding African youth and women. The League was requested to encourage South/South co-operation.

The Pan-African Conference closed on 23 November with a message to African States stressing the humanitarian traditions of Africa, condemning apartheid, re-emphasising the fundamental role of the Red Cross and Red Crescent in the relief of suffering, and asking governments to make a humanitarian gesture in 1989 in honour of the Movement’s 125th Anniversary.

The message was first sent to H. E. Moussa Traoré, President of Mali and current Chairman of the Organization of African Unity, by the “train of humanity”. This train, composed of five coaches, left Dakar on 23 November for Bamako, where it arrived on 28 November after stopping a dozen times. Each stop provided an opportunity for the local inhabitants of the areas in question to visit an exhibition on the activities of the ICRC, the League, and the National Societies of Mali and Senegal, and to see a few films.

Finally, the participants were able to attend the world première of a film on the ICRC by the Nigerian film producer Ola Balogun, “Destination Peace”.

During his stay, ICRC President Mr. Sommaruga was received along with Mr. Villarroel by the President of Senegal, who expressed his firm support for the work of the ICRC and assured Mr. Sommaruga that he could count on his backing in all of the ICRC’s spheres of operation, adding that he was a staunch supporter of international humanitarian law. A private meeting also took place with the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Senegal, Mr. Ibrahima Fall. On this occasion,

Mr. Fall confirmed his government's agreement to the opening of a regional ICRC delegation in Dakar. He also promised that ICRC staff would benefit from full assistance on the part of his government as well as his country's administrative and legal bodies. Finally, Mr. Sommaruga discussed a number of conflict situations of concern for the ICRC in Africa.

Prior to the Pan-African Conference, the Association of Francophone African National Societies met in Dakar on 18 November and addressed a request to the League to strengthen its commitment to the development of the French-speaking National Societies of West Africa. Mr. Stenbäck then announced the opening in the very near future of a regional bureau in Abidjan with financial assistance from the Spanish, French and Norwegian Societies.

The Association also renewed its Committee by electing Mr. Ali Bandiare, President of the Red Cross Society of Niger, to the post of President and Mrs. Siga Seye, President of the Senegalese Red Cross, to the post of Secretary General.

