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MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT

The year 1995 was a time of remembrance and commemoration. It was also a time that spelt tragedy for some and brought fresh hope to others.

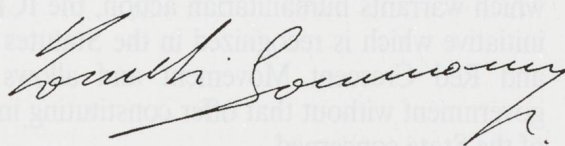
- *Memories of untold suffering were rekindled with the fiftieth anniversary of the end of the Second World War, of the liberation of those who survived the concentration camps, and of the first atom bombs that exploded over Hiroshima and Nagasaki. Thoughts also went to the 22 million victims claimed by the 120 conflicts the world has known since 1945.*
- *Two more auspicious events were commemorated in the course of the year: the fiftieth anniversary of the United Nations and the thirtieth anniversary of the solemn proclamation of the Fundamental Principles of the Red Cross and Red Crescent.*
- *Over 30 conflicts raged around the globe in 1995, bringing tragedy to their innumerable victims.*
- *Hopes for peace rose during the year and were consolidated by favourable developments in Africa, Asia, the Middle East and Europe.*

Another source of hope was the convening, after nine long years, of the International Conference of the Red Cross and Red Crescent. This 26th Conference, held in Geneva from 3 to 7 December, enabled the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement and the world's governments to resume their vital and constructive dialogue on matters of humanitarian concern, in a unique multilateral forum: indeed, for more than a hundred years successive Conferences have put forward ideas for the development of international humanitarian law, suggestions to guide the Movement in its work, and proposals for action by the most appropriate means to prevent and alleviate the suffering endured by the most vulnerable.

In order to accomplish its impartial, neutral and independent humanitarian task the International Committee of the Red Cross needs to find new contacts, partnerships and synergies, both within the international community and in each individual country,

- *to share the values common to all mankind: the instruments of international humanitarian law form a universal code, well suited to the present times, of the basic dictates of humanity that are indeed common to all peoples and to all ages;*
- *to reaffirm the humanitarian rules and principles: universal ratification of these international treaties must be achieved, enabling legislation must be adopted at the national level (in particular to ensure that violations of the law are duly prosecuted), and the humanitarian principles must be taught at all levels of the education system so that the same mistakes are not repeated, inexorably, generation after generation;*
- *to give new strength and meaning to the values that form the very core of the Red Cross and Red Crescent ideal so as to help build a more humane world, where solidarity with one's fellow human beings will truly become a reality.*

The ICRC expresses its gratitude to all those who have demonstrated their support for its mission.



Cornelio Sommaruga
President of the ICRC