

A

note from the Editor

This issue of the Review opens with an appeal to the international community: "People on War: Solemn Appeal". Launched on 12 August 1999 to coincide with the 50th anniversary of the 1949 Geneva Conventions, the Appeal is addressed first and foremost to governments, which are primarily responsible for ensuring the fulfilment of humanitarian commitments in times of armed conflict. But also, and perhaps even more so, it is addressed to everyone who, in one way or another, can influence the behaviour of those involved in violence. While the ceremony of 12 August was thus held to mark an important event in the history of mankind, it also enabled the international community to strengthen its commitment to the values on which international humanitarian law is based.

In devoting the first pages of this issue to the Solemn Appeal, the Review wishes to remind its readers that its mission is also to encourage humanitarian action. Reflection is important, but it is not enough. In the final analysis, action is what counts: ensuring that humanitarian obligations are met, protecting and assisting conflict victims and taking suitable measures when international humanitarian law is violated. The Review would like to make its own modest contribution to these aims.

The 27th International Conference of the Red Cross and Red Crescent is to be held in Geneva from 31 October to 6 November. It will bring together delegates of the States party to the Geneva Conventions and representatives of the various components of the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement: the National Societies, the ICRC and the Federation.

The International Conference is one of the most important humanitarian forums in the world. Its purpose is to bring about greater unity between the States party to the Geneva Conventions and the various com-

ponents of the Movement. This year two major themes are on the agenda: "Humanitarian commitment – Belligerents, victims and the international community" and "Humanitarian commitment – Governments and National Societies". In addition to the discussions in commission and plenary, a number of informal workshops will be held on issues of topical interest.

Several of the articles in this issue deal with themes that are to be examined either during the Conference itself or during the workshops. We should like to draw particular attention to the contributions of Sir Alan Munro, Dr Ali Said Ali and François Bugnion, which will be of interest to readers concerned with humanitarian action in general. Finally, this issue also contains the second part of Catherine Rey-Schyrer's article on the drafting and adoption of the Geneva Conventions of 12 August 1949.

THE REVIEW