

A note from the Editor

On 18 July 1998 the plenipotentiary representatives of 120 States from all parts of the globe signed the Final Act of the Rome Diplomatic Conference that drew up and adopted the Statute of the International Criminal Court. This is a truly remarkable achievement. Indeed, for the first time in history a permanent international court will be empowered to enhance respect for rules that form part of the heritage of the world's civilizations. Admittedly, the new court does not provide the perfect solution that many were hoping would result from the lengthy negotiations that led up to its creation, but on the other hand, the ground has now been laid for more decisive action in combating impunity.

This issue of the *Review* features an initial assessment by Marie-Claude Roberge of the outcome of the Rome Conference. On behalf of the ICRC, the author closely followed the preparatory work done in both New York and Rome. In-depth analyses of issues relating more specifically to the implementation of international humanitarian law will be published at a later date.

Another article by media expert Roy Gutman describes what it is like to work as a journalist in conflict situations. He discusses how the media could persuade players in a conflict to respect the basic rules of humanitarian law and puts forward a practical proposal which should arouse the interest of media professionals in the humanitarian cause and humanitarian law. Urs Boegli, head of the ICRC's media services, raises one of the thorniest issues faced by any humanitarian organization in determining its communication policy: what to do when disaster strikes in the humanitarian sphere — denounce violations or remain silent? The article offers a few answers to the problem, without, however, challenging the obvious principle that the ICRC must first and foremost take action in aid of the victims. Various accounts by communication experts are followed by a study by Yves Sandoz, the ICRC's Director for International Law and Communication, on rights and obligations in terms of being informed and

spreading information about conflict situations, viewed from the standpoint of international humanitarian law.

In a different vein, Rohan Hardcastle and Adrian Chua advocate the right to receive assistance in the event of natural disaster. The author invites experts to consider a draft convention that would guarantee such a right through the establishment of international obligations. Peter Walker offers a number of comments on this proposal.

Several contributions discuss measures aimed at more effective monitoring and even the banning of certain particularly abhorrent weapons. For example, a good insight into the Ottawa Convention prohibiting anti-personnel mines is given by Stuart Maslen and Peter Herby, who followed the drafting process.

A page of ICRC history is written by historical research officer Françoise Perret, who describes the ICRC's action in Cuba during the Castro revolution of the early fifties. In another article, Ly Djibril describes the humanitarian rules aimed at restricting recourse to violence in the tradition of the Pulaar of West Africa.

Lastly, we should like to draw your attention to the note on the *Review's* new look as from next year.

The Review