

PROMOTION OF AND RESPECT FOR INTERNATIONAL HUMANITARIAN LAW

(Resolution adopted at the first plenary session, held on June 7, 1999)

THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY,

RECALLING its resolutions AG/RES. 1270 (XXIV-O/94), AG/RES. 1335 (XXV-O/95), AG/RES. 1408 (XXVI-O/96), AG/RES. 1503 (XXVII-O/97), and AG/RES. 1565 (XXVIII-O/98),

DEEPLY CONCERNED over the persistent violations of international humanitarian law occurring throughout the world and, in particular, over the fate of the civilian population, which is increasingly subject to attacks that contravene the applicable fundamental rules;

RECALLING that it is the obligation of all states to observe and enforce in all circumstances the standards established in the 1949 Geneva Conventions and, where applicable, for the states that are parties thereto, those contained in the 1977 Additional Protocols to those conventions;

UNDERSCORING the need to strengthen the principles of international humanitarian law by achieving its universal acceptance, its widest dissemination, and comprehensive application of its provisions;

AWARE of the need to punish those responsible for war crimes and other serious violations of international humanitarian law, especially the most common violations, and noting, within this context, that the Statute of the International Criminal Court was opened for signature in Rome, on July 17, 1998, at the close of the Conference of Plenipotentiaries, held under United Nations auspices;

RECOGNIZING ONCE MORE the ongoing efforts of the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) to promote and disseminate knowledge of international humanitarian law and the activities it carries out as an organization that is independent, neutral, and impartial under any and all circumstances; and

HAVING CONSIDERED the report of the Permanent Council (CP/CAJP-1599/99),

RESOLVES:

1. To urge the member states that have not yet done so to consider ratification of the 1977 Additional Protocols I and II to the 1949 Geneva Conventions, or, if applicable, accession thereto.

2. To also urge the member states that have not yet done so to consider ratification of, or, if applicable, accession to, the following instruments relating to weapons which may be excessively harmful or have indiscriminate effects:

a. The 1980 Convention on Prohibitions or Restrictions on the Use of Certain Conventional Weapons Which May Be Deemed to Be Excessively Injurious or to Have Indiscriminate Effects (and its Protocols);

b. The 1997 Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production, and Transfer of Anti-personnel Mines and on Their Destruction; and

c. The 1954 Hague Convention for the Protection of Cultural Property in the Event of Armed Conflict.

3. To underscore how important it is for the states, in implementing the body of international humanitarian law, to pay special attention to the following provisions:

a. The widest possible dissemination of international humanitarian law among the armed forces and security forces, by including it in official instruction programs and in training permanent staff in this field in the armed forces;

b. The enactment of the criminal laws required to punish those responsible for war crimes and other serious violations of international humanitarian law;

c. The enactment of legislation to regulate the use of symbols protected under international humanitarian law and to punish abuses thereof; and

d. The obligation, when studying, developing, acquiring, or adopting a new weapon, to determine if its use would violate international humanitarian law, and, if it would, to desist from procuring it for use by the armed forces or security forces and from manufacturing it for other purposes.

4. To call upon the member states and all parties to an armed conflict to prevent the participation of children in hostilities, as well as their recruitment in the armed forces and in organized armed groups.

5. To urge member states to take the necessary steps to ensure that the staff of humanitarian organizations are respected and protected in their territories.

6. To urge the member states and all parties to an armed conflict to help preserve the impartiality, independence, and neutrality of humanitarian action in accordance with the guiding principles adopted by the United Nations General Assembly in its resolution 46/182, dated December 19, 1991.

7. To urge the member states to participate actively in the 27th International Conference of the Red Cross and Red Crescent to be held in Geneva from October 31 to November 6, 1999.

8. To invite the member states to continue to cooperate with the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) in its various spheres of responsibility and to facilitate its work.

9. To invite the Permanent Council, in close coordination with the ICRC, to hold a high-level seminar in the second half of 1999 on the commemoration of the 50th anniversary of the 1949 Geneva Conventions, in keeping with resources allocated in the program-budget and other resources.

10. To request the Secretary General to obtain reports from the member states on the implementation of this resolution and to present a report to the Permanent Council before the General Assembly's thirtieth regular session.