

NEW YORK

The multiple tasks and activities of the UN often have implications of a humanitarian nature. Operating since 1983, the ICRC delegation to the UN serves as a support and a liaison for ICRC operational and legal initiatives. The delegation conveys the ICRC's viewpoint and keeps updated on trends and developments relating to humanitarian issues and promotes IHL.

KEY RESULTS/CONSTRAINTS IN 2015

- The ICRC addressed the UN General Assembly and the Security Council, emphasizing such matters as the importance of humanitarian access, compliance with IHL and a stricter weapons control regime.
- UN General Assembly resolutions on the safety of humanitarian personnel and on strengthening the coordination of humanitarian assistance highlighted key ICRC concerns, in particular safe health-care delivery.
- UN officials and representatives of Member States learnt more about some ICRC operations, such as those in the Lake Chad region and the Middle East, and the ICRC's analysis of the humanitarian situations there.
- The ICRC kept abreast of developments in the humanitarian field – such as the Sustainable Development Goals – which fed into its institutional decision-making processes, helping strengthen its field activities.

YEARLY RESULTS

Level of achievement of ICRC yearly objectives/plans of action

HIGH

EXPENDITURE IN KCHF

Protection	-
Assistance	-
Prevention	2,682
Cooperation with National Societies	-
General	15
Total	2,697
<i>Of which: Overheads</i>	165

IMPLEMENTATION RATE

Expenditure/yearly budget	97%
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PERSONNEL

Mobile staff	3
Resident staff (daily workers not included)	10

CONTEXT

The UN and the wider diplomatic community continued to face an international landscape fraught with conflicts – many of which were protracted, escalating and/or transnational affairs – as in the Central African Republic, the Democratic Republic of the Congo (hereafter DRC), Iraq, Mali, the Syrian Arab Republic and Yemen, as well as throughout the Lake Chad region. While the upheaval was marked by context-specific nuances, many of the broad humanitarian concerns were recurrent: restrictions on humanitarian access or the particular dangers facing women and children, for instance.

The UN continued to have peacekeeping missions deployed in several countries; amid political and security challenges, a number of these forces – such as the UN Organizational Stabilization Mission in the DRC (MONUSCO) and the UN Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS) – were authorized to use force tactically. UNMISS hosted some 150,000 IDPs at “protection-of-civilian” sites in its compounds. At year’s end, the UN was in the process of reviewing its peace operations.

In September, the UN General Assembly adopted the Sustainable Development Goals. The main themes of the 2016 World Humanitarian Summit – humanitarian effectiveness; vulnerabilities and managing risks; transformation through innovation; and serving the needs of people in conflict – and the intersectionality of humanitarian and development goals figured prominently in the discussions taking place at various forums.

ICRC ACTION AND RESULTS

The ICRC’s New York delegation kept frequent contact with UN bodies, Member States and observers, and civil society organizations, to underscore the most critical humanitarian concerns and to call for greater respect for IHL. The organization used its experiences in the field to concretize discussions and to secure these actors’ backing for principled, apolitical humanitarian action. It also expounded on its perspective on specific IHL-related topics and on the situations in particular contexts/regions, during policy debates and other discussions, as well as during the process of drafting UN documents.

As a permanent observer at the UN, the ICRC maintained a regular presence at Security Council and General Assembly events. It served as an expert briefer at the Security Council’s open debate on the protection of civilians and delivered statements to the General Assembly on the need to strengthen IHL compliance, regulations on the use of weapons and responses to the specific issues/vulnerabilities faced by groups such as women, children refugees and IDPs, as well as on the importance of the rule of law and universal jurisdiction.

The ICRC was also on hand to provide Member States with feedback on IHL-related issues. Thus, the ICRC helped shape UN discussions, reports and resolutions, so that these accounted for IHL and other humanitarian issues. Resolutions adopted by the General Assembly contained strong language on the need to address violence against people seeking or providing health/medical care, among other issues of concern to the ICRC.

The ICRC sustained its cooperation with the Department of Peacekeeping Operations (DPKO) and the Office of Legal Affairs (OLA), and provided them with recommendations for guidelines

and procedures for peacekeeping missions. It also contributed input towards the UN’s review of its peace operations. The annual joint ICRC and DPKO workshop allowed both institutions to discuss the impact of peacekeeping missions on the civilian population, and to take stock of their cooperation. During briefings for DPKO staff and State representatives, the ICRC addressed the applicability of IHL to multinational forces.

The ICRC also pursued direct engagement with UN officials and representatives of Member States at regular bilateral/multilateral meetings. These included the high-level events attended by the ICRC president and other senior officials on the sidelines of the General Assembly session, and the ICRC’s monthly meetings with the presidency of the Security Council. ICRC delegates regularly delivered briefings on the organization’s work, such as its operations in the Horn of Africa, the Lake Chad region and the Middle East. The ICRC and the New York University School of Law jointly organized the 32nd Annual Seminar for Diplomats on IHL, which was attended by over 120 State representatives.

Such contacts helped decision-makers at various levels to deepen their understanding of the ICRC’s distinct mandate and approach, while also helping the ICRC to keep abreast of pertinent developments in the humanitarian field and to streamline its own field practices. The ICRC closely followed the work undertaken by the international community to define the Sustainable Development Goals.

The ICRC continued to coordinate with other organizations and UN-affiliated consortia, and with Movement partners in particular. To broaden public awareness of its priorities and activities, the ICRC also maintained its ties to New York-based NGOs and think-tanks and its contacts with academic institutions and UN-accredited media.

ACTORS OF INFLUENCE

Through its regular engagement with the UN and its bodies and Member States, the ICRC helped ensure that IHL and other matters linked to the protection of civilians were duly considered in these entities’ discussions and in decision-making processes of consequence to the humanitarian situation in the field.

UN takes IHL into account while drafting its resolutions and other documents

As an expert briefer during the Security Council’s open debate on the protection of civilians, the ICRC reiterated States’ obligations to: facilitate conflict-affected people’s access to assistance; respect the legal provisions applicable to conflict, particularly with regard to preventing sexual violence and responding to its consequences; and ensure broader respect for IHL.

The ICRC addressed the General Assembly on several occasions – at the latter’s 70th session, it emphasized the harms accruing from insufficient compliance with IHL and the need for more effective humanitarian action; it also called on the international community to consider the manner in which local actors are involved in humanitarian responses and to pay attention to the convergence of humanitarian and development goals. During General Assembly committee events, the ICRC spoke out on the importance of strengthening IHL compliance, regulating the use of weapons and addressing the specific issues faced by such groups as women, children, refugees and IDPs, and on the value of the rule of law and universal jurisdiction.

Member States requested the ICRC's feedback on IHL-related matters. Ahead of the Security Council's adoption of relevant resolutions, the ICRC was consulted on the subjects of the abduction and detention of children and the protections afforded to women by IHL. The General Assembly's resolution on strengthening the coordination of humanitarian emergency assistance referred to the protection of children in armed conflict and the need to ensure safe health-care delivery, directly mentioning the Health Care in Danger project; the latter theme was also reflected in the resolution on the safety and security of humanitarian personnel.

These events served as springboards for the ICRC to discuss, with other influential actors, its work in specific countries and/or expound on key humanitarian issues. On the sidelines of the General Assembly session, the ICRC, represented by its president, and Kuwait co-hosted a high-level event on the principle of humanity.

UN panel uses ICRC feedback for review of its peace operations

The DPKO and the OLA drew on the ICRC's legal advice, using its recommendations, to revise general UN guidelines on the protection of civilians by peacekeeping missions. The UN Security Council resolution extending MONUSCO's mandate contained provisions for training in IHL and standardized procedures for internment.

The annual ICRC and DPKO workshop enabled both institutions to discuss the impact of peacekeeping missions on civilians, and to take stock of their cooperation. During briefings for DPKO staff, State representatives and the General Assembly's committee on peacekeeping forces, the ICRC addressed the applicability of IHL to multinational forces.

The ICRC also contributed input to the UN secretariat and the high-level panel, which were undertaking a review of UN peace operations.

ICRC calls for creation of legally binding framework to prohibit nuclear weapons

The ICRC maintained its commitment to helping reinforce the regulations on the use and trade of weapons and to supporting the development of applicable norms. It contributed to the general discourse on the use of explosive weapons in densely populated areas, nuclear weapons, cyber-warfare and new technologies; for the first time, the ICRC expressed concern over the possibility of the weaponization of outer space. At several events – the Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons, for instance – the ICRC president urged States to establish a time-bound framework for creating a legally binding agreement to prohibit the use of nuclear weapons and to eliminate existing stockpiles.

High-level contact helps foster support for IHL

The organization regularly touched base with UN officials, representatives of Members States, including officials from emerging powers, and regional leaders, to encourage a broader base of support for humanitarian work and for resolutions and policies (see above) that reflect related issues accordingly. For example, the ICRC had monthly meetings with the presidency of the UN Security Council. ICRC delegates regularly briefed State representatives and other policy-makers present in New York on its work in the field, particularly in countries in the Horn of Africa, the Lake Chad region and the Middle East.

At the annual seminar for diplomats, which the ICRC organized with the New York University School of Law, over 120 State representatives discussed weapon-related issues and learnt about the ICRC's standpoint on these matters.

International community works together to define future humanitarian agenda

Meetings of the Humanitarian Liaison Working Group and the UN Inter-Agency Standing Committee facilitated coordination of humanitarian activities and allowed the ICRC to monitor policy developments and other broad issues (e.g. those concerning accountability, early recovery and partnerships), to underline the need for principled humanitarian action and to set out its priorities and concerns. The ICRC followed the international community's efforts to define the Sustainable Development Goals, for example through its attendance at OCHA's annual global humanitarian policy forum, where it expressed its views on policy shifts towards reinforcing national capacities during humanitarian crises.

The ICRC continued to interact closely with Movement partners, NGOs, think-tanks and UN-affiliated humanitarian organizations, and participated in their events, furthering understanding of each other's positions on pertinent issues and of their distinct mandates. Notably, the ICRC participated in a public consultation on forced displacement and migration, where it emphasized the importance of carefully considering migrants' vulnerabilities in the design of protection and assistance mechanisms. Other organizations consulted the ICRC for guidance on specific IHL-related matters. These exchanges fed into the ICRC's own analysis of cross-cutting and context-specific issues and helped it strengthen its field practice.

UN-accredited media covered ICRC activities, aided by the organization's promotional materials. At ICRC events with the academic community, future decision-makers enriched their grasp of IHL. The delegation continued to develop its presence on social media and maintained its targeted communication initiatives.