

The Secretary of State for External Affairs, the Honourable Mitchell Sharp, announces the participation of Canada in the Diplomatic Conference on the Reaffirmation and Development of International Humanitarian Law Applicable in Armed Conflicts which will be held in Geneva, Switzerland, from February 20 to March 29, 1974.

The Diplomatic Conference is being convened by the Swiss Federal Council in order to reaffirm existing international humanitarian law applicable in armed conflicts and to up-date the four Geneva Conventions of August 12, 1949 for the Protection of War Victims. Specifically, delegates to the Diplomatic Conference will be working for the adoption of two Additional Protocols which will supplement the provisions of the Geneva Conventions of 1949.

The two draft Additional Protocols have been prepared over the past several years by the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) in consultation with government experts, primarily at meetings held in 1971 and 1972.

Although it is generally agreed by the international community that the four Geneva Conventions of 1949 have provided a good basis in international law for the protection of victims of armed conflict situations, recent experience has demonstrated that certain provisions of these Conventions have not been universally respected and additionally the Geneva Conventions have proven to be deficient in some respects in response to contemporary warfare.

The Canadian Government attaches particular importance to the second draft Additional Protocol, which is the result of a Canadian initiative. It is intended to provide an internationally agreed minimum standard of humanitarian protection for persons affected by the increasingly frequent civil and guerilla style wars. The existing Geneva Conventions of 1949 and the first draft Additional Protocol apply mainly to international armed conflict situations.

The Conference will also give preliminary consideration to the possible prohibition or restriction of the use of napalm and other incendiary weapons and of other weapons which may cause unnecessary suffering or be indiscriminate in effect. In this regard, the primary task of the Conference will likely be to establish a work programme for a meeting of government experts, which the ICRC has agreed to convene later in the year, where this matter will receive more detailed consideration.

The Canadian Government delegation to the Diplomatic Conference on the Reaffirmation and Development of International Humanitarian Law Applicable in Armed Conflicts will be composed as follows:

Head of Delegation:	Mr. David M. Miller Department of External Affairs
Deputy Head of Delegation:	Col. J. P. Wolfe Department of National Defence
Advisors:	Col I. A. Marriott Department of National Defence