

cluding the Tokyo, Hague and Montreal conventions on aerial hijacking and the Vienna convention on the protection of diplomats.

While the prospects for the Terrorism Committee did not appear encouraging, the thirty-first General Assembly session also witnessed the birth of a West German initiative that proposed the establishment of a committee to draft an international convention against the taking of hostages. Canada supported this proposal and co-sponsored the West German draft resolution embodying it. A modified version of that resolution was adopted by consensus after lengthy corridor discussions. The committee, which will meet in Geneva in August 1977, was requested to make every effort to submit a draft convention to the General Assembly in time for consideration at its next session.

As co-sponsor of the West German resolution, Canada hoped that the committee established under it would be able to achieve concrete results, if not in the short term at least in the long term. It is to be hoped that ambiguities in the mandate of the committee will not block progress on this front.

International humanitarian law in armed conflicts

The Diplomatic Conference on the Reaffirmation and Development of International Humanitarian Law Applicable in Armed Conflicts held its third session in Geneva from April to June. The object of the conference is the adoption of two additional protocols to the Geneva conventions of 1949 on the protection of war victims.

The first session of the conference, in 1974, was principally involved in establishing rules of procedure and in forming draft committees, and it adopted only seven articles. The second session, in 1975, was more productive and adopted in working committees more than 70 articles of the two draft protocols, generally through consensus. The third session, which was expected to be the last, was successful in resolving several difficult issues remaining from the previous sessions. A number of difficult questions remained, however, in-

cluding that of the taking of reprisals in certain conditions, superior orders, final provisions (adhesion of non-state liberation movements to Protocol I), civil defence and prisoner-of-war status for guerilla fighters. In the opinion of the Canadian delegation, the third session was limited in its results but nevertheless valuable for several worthwhile gains and for sharpening the focus on the difficult issues yet to be resolved. These were to be considered at a fourth session of the conference in Geneva, from March 17 to June 10, 1977.

Another way in which international humanitarian law may be strengthened is by banning certain conventional weapons. Before the 1976 session of the Diplomatic Conference, government experts had met in Lugano from January 28 to February 28 to discuss the restriction of prohibition of weapons that might cause unnecessary suffering or have indiscriminate effects.

The Lugano conference produced a report containing more than 20 proposals on various possible restrictions or prohibitions. This report was presented to the *Ad Hoc* Committee on Conventional Weapons of the Diplomatic Conference. However, it is clear that further debate and negotiation will be necessary before any real ban on certain conventional weapons can be achieved.