



No.51

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
SEPTEMBER 22, 1969

HUMANITARIAN RELIEF - RED CROSS CONFERENCE

The Secretary of State for External Affairs, the Honourable Mitchell Sharp, today made the following statement:

I am very pleased to be able to announce that Canada has been instrumental in achieving real progress towards the development of international humanitarian law during the 21st International Red Cross Conference, held in Istanbul from September 6 to 13.

Three decisions of far-reaching importance were made. The first was embodied in a Declaration of Principles on International Humanitarian Relief to Civilian Populations in Disaster Situations. This declaration was drafted by Canada and Norway, after consultation with the Canadian and Norwegian Red Cross, and was adopted without any opposing votes. The Declaration affirms that human suffering in all of its manifestations is of deep concern to the conscience of mankind; recognizes that further steps must be taken by the international community to ensure prompt and effective relief action to civilian populations in both natural and other disaster situations; and goes on to lay down six important principles, namely:

1. The fundamental concern of mankind is the protection and welfare of the individual and the safeguarding of basic human rights;
2. Relief by impartial international humanitarian organizations for civilian populations in both natural and other disaster situations should be treated as humanitarian and non-political;
3. Effective coordination of action by impartial international humanitarian organizations is essential;
4. Disaster relief should be provided without discrimination and should in no circumstances be regarded as an unfriendly act;