

At the first session of the Diplomatic Conference a great deal of time was spent on the resolution of preliminary questions of a political and procedural nature. For example, the conference had been requested by the U.N. General Assembly and by the 22nd International Conference of the Red Cross, which met in Tehran in November, 1973, to consider inviting representatives of various national liberation movements recognized by regional inter-governmental organizations to participate in the work of the Diplomatic Conference. This issue provoked considerable debate and was resolved only after difficult behind-the-scenes negotiations, in which the Canadian Delegation had a leading role, resulting in a consensus resolution which allowed the representatives of about fifteen liberation movements from Africa and the Middle East to participate in the Conference as observers without the right to vote.

The self-proclaimed state of Guinea-Bissau was granted, also by consensus, the right of full participation at the Conference, but the Provisional Revolutionary Government of South Viet-Nam (PRG) was denied such right by the narrow vote of 38 to 37. The Canadian Delegation voted against full participation by the PRG since Canada recognizes the Republic of Viet-Nam as the sole legal Government of South Viet-Nam.

Because of the inordinate amount of time consumed on these questions and in the establishment of a geographically balanced Bureau and committee structure for the Conference, only about two weeks of this first session were devoted to substantive debate on the draft Additional Protocols. The three main committees, however, did consider some sixteen articles, of which seven were adopted (somewhat provisionally) at the Committee level.

The most contentious substantive issue raised at the Conference concerned the scope of the first Additional Protocol. The majority of non-aligned states, supported by Eastern European and several Latin American states secured majority approval in committee of a text of Article 1 of that Protocol which would have the effect of automatically converting into "international" armed conflicts all self-proclaimed wars of self-determination against colonial domination, alien occupation and racist regimes, regardless