

“HUMANITY AND THE MEDIA”

The representatives of 24 national associations of journalists from the African continent together with nine international organizations (including UNESCO, UNHCR and UNDRO) took part in a seminar held in Tunis from 7 to 11 February on the theme “Humanity and the media”.

Organized jointly by the ICRC and the Union of African journalists (UAJ) in collaboration with the Association of Tunisian Journalists, this meeting was the second of its kind; the first one took place in Nairobi in 1985 and dealt with the theme “African Journalists and International Humanitarian Law”.

The ICRC delegation was led by Mr. R. Jäckli, a member of the Committee, accompanied by Mr. A. Modoux, Director of the Communication Department, Mr. Y. Sandoz, Director of the Department of Principles and Relations with the Movement, Mr. T. Germond, in charge of the regional delegations for Africa, Mr. Zen Ruffinen, regional delegate in Tunis, and Mr. S. Caccia, in charge of public relations, and assisted by Mrs. Y. Capel.

The seminar concentrated mainly on examining the contribution of African journalists to reconciliation, peace and development on the African continent; it concluded by appealing to African journalists to help in establishing a climate of peace and understanding amongst peoples by disseminating as widely as possible to governments and the public a knowledge of humanitarian principles and ideals. Similarly, the participants stressed the role the African media should play in making the public aware of the need to counter the adverse effects of conflicts and natural disasters on development.

The participants also launched an appeal for greater freedom of the press and better protection for journalists in the performance of their professional activities. They recommended the implementation of alternative information policies with a view to achieving greater involvement of all sections of the population in the development effort, together with in-job training for journalists and exchanges between communication experts.

Lastly, the participants recommended that the ICRC and the UAJ propose to the United Nations Secretary-General that a Year of International Humanitarian Law be proclaimed.