IDRL e-newsletter - December 2005

**IDRL programme updates**

**IDRL global appeal 2006-2007 online**
The IDRL programme will officially launch its 2006-2007 Global Appeal (2,680,385 CHF) on 15 December 2005, as part of the International Federation’s Annual Appeal launch. We welcome all financial contributions to the programme. Find out more about the IDRL database, regional meetings, thematic study and other planned activities for 2006-2007.

**IDRL surveys: share your operational challenges**
Thanks to the staff support of the French Red Cross, IDRL surveys will soon be on their way to your e-mail box! Read more

**New case studies**
In November, the IDRL programme undertook a research mission to Sri Lanka looking into the legal issues arising from the tsunami operation. Read a brief overview of legal issues arising during the tsunami.

Within two weeks of the Pakistan earthquake of 8 October 2005, which killed more than 75,000 people and rendered at least 3 million homeless, an IDRL delegate was sent to Pakistan to support the immediate legal needs of the Red Cross Movement's relief operation and investigate IDRL issues in general. A report will be available soon. Read more

**Workshops, meetings and conferences**

- In September, the IDRL programme participated in the Asian Conference on Disaster Reduction (Beijing). The Beijing Action for Disaster Reduction, the conference’s outcome document, underlines the importance of national legal preparedness as well as volunteer networks such as the Red Cross/Red Crescent (see section 1.2).

- In November, the IDRL programme made a presentation on the rights of vulnerable communities in disaster management to the World Conference on Disaster Reduction, Focus on Corporate Sector Role & Responsibility (Mumbai). Read the Mumbai Declaration.

- On 28 November, the IDRL programme participated in a legal round table discussion in Washington D.C. on foreign disaster assistance to the United States of America organized by the U.S. Federal Emergency Management Agency. Read the background paper which the IDRL programme provided to participants.

- On 2-5 December, the IDRL team attended the Wilton Park Conference on Improving Natural and Regional Disaster Response Capacity where it presented on issues of national legislation.

**About the International Federation’s IDRL programme**
The programme seeks to reduce the vulnerability and

**IDRL developments**

**Treaties**

- **Revised Kyoto Convention to enter into force**
A revised treaty on customs cooperation could facilitate relief operations. More information

- **UN GA adopts new optional Protocol to the 1994 Safety Convention**
The new Protocol could enhance the security of disaster response personnel. More information

- **The Tampere Convention gains ground**
With the addition of a new member, the number of state parties now stands at 33. More information

**Red Cross/Red Crescent developments**

- **Council of Delegates debates access**
The Council noted that access to beneficiaries often depends on IDRL frameworks. More information

- **Balkans Societies discuss IDRL**
A conference of Balkans societies identifies ongoing IDRL needs. More information

**Conference statements**

- **Asian regional organizations react to the tsunami**
SAARC and APEC call for greater regional cooperation in disasters. More information

- **World Summit on the Information Society**
Summit calls for ICT cooperation on disaster information. More information
suffering of people affected by non-conflict disasters by raising awareness, promoting the implementation, and strengthening the laws, rules and principles that ensure a timely, adequate and efficient international response to disasters, where international involvement is requested.

The IDRL programme has carried out its activities since 2001 thanks to the financial contributions of Australian, Austrian, British, Finnish, Norwegian and Swiss Red Cross Societies and Governments.

**Weekly IDRL news service e-mail**
Would you like to hear about developments as they occur? Sign up for the free IDRL news service by sending an e-mail to idrl@ifrc.org

**IDRL surveys: share your operational challenges**
At the beginning of January 2006, in support of the thematic study, the IDRL programme will launch a series of questionnaires to governments, National Societies, inter-governmental and non-governmental organizations and private companies to sound out the primary legal challenges they have encountered in international disaster assistance and to determine to what extent they are finding existing IDRL instruments useful. The questionnaires will be made available on the Federation’s web site as well as in paper-based format. For queries, please contact Clément Cazaubon, seconded to the IDRL programme from the French Red Cross. Read the survey strategy paper.

**New case studies**
A half-day workshop on IDRL was organized, attended by 30 different organizations (government, UN, international and local NGOs). The IDRL Asia-Pacific coordinator and the Sri Lanka researcher conducted meetings in Colombo and also undertook field visits to Ampara and Galle.

**Pakistan earthquake**
The IDRL delegate supported the delegation in addressing many of the typical legal challenges that arise in disaster operations. Typical examples are negotiating MOUs with Red Cross and Red Crescent National Societies so that their relationship with the Federation and other parties was agreed upon, or supporting the logistics and procurement delegates on issues concerning the importation of relief supplies. By putting in place these arrangements at an early stage in the operation, the aim was to provide a sound legal framework for the Federation’s activities. This was intended to both enhance the effectiveness of the operation and to minimize potential legal liabilities in the future. The Federation’s legal unit will continue to be closely involved as the operation continues over the winter. This is likely to involve working on more coordination frameworks with other humanitarian organizations, and with the Pakistan authorities.

**Treaties**

**Revised Kyoto Convention to enter into force**
On 3 November, the 1999 Protocol which revises the Kyoto Convention on the Simplification and Harmonization of Customs Procedures received its 40th accession and will therefore enter into force in January 2006. Annex 3.5 of the revised Convention is specifically focused on relief consignments. It calls on states to simplify procedures and waive duties and tolls for humanitarian aid. To date, six states have signed Specific Annex 3.5: Algeria, Australia, Korea, New Zealand, Uganda, Zimbabwe. Read the text of the Convention and its annexes.

**UN General Assembly adopts new optional Protocol to the Safety Convention**
In 1994, the United Nations adopted the Convention on the Safety of United Nations and Associated Personnel, which requires state parties to take measures to ensure the physical protection of certain humanitarian personnel, equipment and premises when acting in peacekeeping operations. On 8 December 2005, the United Nations General Assembly adopted a new optional protocol to the Convention that expands its protective scope to all emergency humanitarian operations, as well as “peace-building operations”. However, a state party can exclude application of the Protocol to natural disaster operations if it makes a specific declaration to this effect prior to the deployment of the operation. To find out more, visit the UN web site.

**The Tampere Convention gains ground**
On 17 November, Romania became the 33rd state to ratify the Tampere Convention on the Provision of Telecommunication Resources for Disaster Mitigation and Relief Operations. The Tampere Convention, adopted in 1998, provides for the facilitated entry and operations of telecommunications equipment in disaster situations as well as certain “privileges and immunities” for associated personnel. It entered into force on 8 January 2005. Find out more about the Convention.
Red Cross/Red Crescent developments

Council of Delegates debates access
On 18 November, the Council of Delegates of the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement considered the issue of access to victims and vulnerable people. The Council noted that IDRL is crucial to improving and maintaining such access. One of the four recommendations emerging from the Commissions pertained to the need to continue and strengthen the Federation’s IDRL programme. Find out more.

Balkans Societies discuss IDRL
On 12 November, National Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies from the Balkans and some neighbouring countries held a joint exercise in disaster response in Divljane where they reaffirmed the need for greater regional cooperation on IDRL issues, as set out in a set of recommendations these societies previously developed in 2004. Read the recommendations.

Conference statements

Asian regional organizations react to the tsunami
More regional organizations in Asia have reacted to the devastation of the December 2004 tsunami with commitments to improve coordination and collaboration among themselves and outside actors in disaster response. At a summit of heads of state or government held in Dhaka, Bangladesh, the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) declared its support for the elaboration of a “Comprehensive Framework on Early Warning and Disaster Management” and underlined “the urgency to put in place a permanent regional response mechanism dedicated to disaster preparedness, emergency relief and rehabilitation to ensure immediate response”. Read the full text of the Dhaka Declaration.

Similarly, at their summit in Busan, Korea on 18-19 November, the economic leaders of Asian Pacific Economic Co-operation (APEC) committed to improve their collective response to address disasters, and in particular to take quick steps to confront the rise of avian influenza. Read the full text of the Busan Declaration.

World Summit on the Information Society calls for ICT cooperation on disaster information
The second World Summit on the Information Society was held in Tunis, Tunisia in November. In the final outcome document, participants called for regional and international cooperation to share information and communication technology (ICT) tools, create effective early warning systems, and share information on disaster management. Read the full text of the Tunis Agenda for the Information Society.