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'Seminar on Tracing Persons in Emergency Situations', jointly organised by the Japanese Red Cross Society (JRCS), the Cabinet Secretariat and the ICRC.

Dear Reader

On 29-30 January 2007, for the first time, Tokyo was the host city of a Seminar on "Tracing Persons in Emergency Situations". Organised jointly by the ICRC, the Japanese Red Cross Society (JRCS) and the Cabinet Secretariat, the Seminar attracted the participation of 83 participants who are involved in the protection of civilians in emergencies as well as disaster management.

The ICRC was encouraged by the overwhelming response as it indicated the depth of interest in Japan with regard to one of our key operational activities, Tracing and Restoring Family Links (RFL), as well as preparedness in any conflict or natural emergency. It was also an opportunity to discuss experiences and best practices with high-level interlocutors. A brief outline of the dialogue is outlined in the following pages.

Readers may be especially interested to know that on 9 July 2007, Her Majesty the Empress presented three recipients with the Florence Nightingale Award, which is the highest international distinction that can be awarded to nurses and voluntary aides. Other relevant news on events which feature the many ways through which Japan works with the ICRC are also included in this issue for your information. It will be our privilege to continue this high level of cooperation with the Japanese political and military authorities, as well as the JRCS in the future.

We thank you for your continuing support.

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Regional Delegation
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'TRACING OF MISSING PERSONS' SEMINAR, TOKYO

On 29-30 January 2007, the ICRC, the Japanese Red Cross Society (JRCS) and the Cabinet Secretariat were the joint organisers of a Seminar on "Tracing Persons in Emergency Situations", held in Tokyo. A total of 83 participants attended, of which 40 were from the Cabinet Secretariat, the Japanese Self Defence Forces, the Ministry for Internal Affairs and Communication, the Fire and Disaster Management Agency, the Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare, the Ministry of Defence, the Ministry of Justice, the National Police Agency, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Ministry of Land, Infrastructure and Transport; 22 from local Prefectures; and 21 from the JRCS.

The Seminar was aimed at reaffirming Japan's role as a State which is Party to the Geneva Conventions, as well as to share with the participants the ICRC's practical knowledge and experiences in the field of restoring family links (RFL).

Béatrice Munier, from the ICRC's Central Tracing Agency based in Geneva, introduced the main references for the RFL activities. She also presented the tools, the reality and the challenges of tracing activities in various emergencies using concrete examples from Sri Lanka (a situation of armed conflict), hurricane Katrina in the US (natural disaster) and some countries affected by the 2006 tsunami (complex emergency, i.e. a natural disaster in a zone of conflict or violence/tension – see next page). The discussion encompassed issues such as 'the missing', the importance of psychological support to the families of the victims, and the management of human remains.

It was noted that in Japan, there is growing interest in International Humanitarian Law (IHL), following the country's accession to the Additional Protocols to the Geneva Conventions and the adoption of the emergency Civilian Protection Law in 2004, as well as the adoption of the Law for Peace and Independence of Japan in 2003.

Legal references which might be useful for Japan to consider in the further implementation of IHL were provided by Alexandre Faite, the Regional Legal Advisor of the ICRC. Families of non-nationals have a right to know the fate of their relatives and the State is obliged to observe that right. A point worth noting is that in armed attack situations, Japan's Civilian Protection Law explicitly spells out the responsibilities of national and local governments, as well as entrusts the JRCS with the tracing of non-nationals.

Upon the outbreak of a conflict, the authorities must establish a National Information Bureau responsible for receiving and transmitting information on certain categories of non-nationals (protected civilians, prisoners of war, the missing and the deceased). The relevant information is channelled through a Central Information Agency that must be established in a neutral country (or through the ICRC's Central Tracing Agency). Some countries are currently reflecting on a blueprint for the establishment of such a Bureau.

The Seminar ended with an assurance from the ICRC that it remains ready to support the Japanese authorities and JRCS in building up national capacity in tracing activities.



'TRACING OF MISSING PERSONS' SEMINAR, TOKYO

"An initiative of the ICRC to organise a Tracing Seminar in Tokyo in January 2007 was epoch-making. It is said that the genuine role of the Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement is to fill the humanitarian gap between public services and coping capacity of the individual/community. In this context, the auxiliary role of the Japanese Red Cross Society (JRCS) in one of the wealthiest countries in the world must be somewhat unique as compared to other National Societies. The JRCS is a huge body, running 92 hospitals, 67 Blood Centres with over 12 million members, and three million Volunteers.

For the past 60 years very few Japanese have lost their lives in armed conflict. However, the world climate has changed dramatically, urging peaceful Japan to jump into the rapid stream of the international environment. Thus, along with accession to the two 1977 Geneva Protocols, a series of 'emergency legislations', including the emergency Civilian Protection Law was promulgated in 2004.

One of the most important aspects for the National Society is to undertake tracing services for foreigners in Japan, estimated at over 10 million, including 2 million residents. At the time of the Great Han-

shin-Awaji (Kobe) Earthquake in 1995, the JRCS responded to approximately 1,300 tracing requests from abroad, which was the largest number received since WWII.

Japanese people can start thinking on what could be the humanitarian consequences of having a 'missing person' among their loved ones. In particular, I do hope that after a long siesta of peace, the seminar will turn out to be an eye-opener not only for the Japanese authorities but also for our colleagues."

Akira Nakata
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Tracing and Restoring Family Links: A Key Movement Activity



Complex humanitarian crises involving both conflict and natural disaster have become commonplace throughout the world, and it is often the most vulnerable communities who need the greatest assistance. Among the many challenges in these situations is the tracing of missing persons, and where possible, reuniting family members who have been separated. "Restoring Family Links (RFL)" is thus one of the key operational activities of the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement, including the ICRC.

JAPAN-ICRC COOPERATION

Regional Peace Support Training Officers Seminar, Kuala Lumpur: 20th – 22nd March 2007



ICRC Kuala Lumpur Regional Delegation and the Malaysian Armed Forces, co-organised the Regional Peace Support Operations Training Officers' Seminar from 20th – 22nd March 2007. Two of the participants were Japanese. The purpose of the seminar was to exchange knowledge and practical experience relating to International Humanitarian Law which can be applied in peace support missions, in particular the protection of civilians and enhancement of peacekeeping training activities.

Additional Protocols Symposium, Beijing: 18 – 19 June 2007

A Symposium for the 30th Anniversary of the Adoption of the 1977 Protocols Additional to the 1949 Geneva Conventions was held in Beijing on 18 – 19 June 2007. The seminar was jointly organised by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People's Republic of China and the ICRC. Participants included representatives from the Japanese Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and the Ministry of Defence. A representative from the Japanese Embassy addressed the audience, reflecting Japan's position as a State party to the Protocols.

41st Award of the Florence Nightingale Medal, Tokyo: 9 July 2007



Every two years, the ICRC invites the Central Committees of the National Societies to submit nominations for the Florence Nightingale Medal, which is the highest international distinction that can be awarded to a nurse or voluntary nursing aide. This is the 41st year that the Medal has been awarded to deserving recipients worldwide. In Japan, the Japanese Red Cross Society (JRCS) held the awards ceremony at the Tokyo Prince Hotel on 9th July, with an audience of Her Majesty the Empress.



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