



Indian Council of World Affairs
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Press Release

on

**Roundtable Discussion with
Mr. Yves Daccord**

Director General,
International Committee of the Red Cross

on

**‘From Baghdad to Bamako: The Changing Nature of Armed
Conflict and Humanitarian Diplomacy’**

A Roundtable Discussion was held with Mr. Yves Daccord, Director General of the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) at the Indian Council of World Affairs (ICWA), New Delhi on 13 March 2013. Mr. Daccord was accompanied by Ms. Mary Werntz, and other members of the International Committee of the Red Cross. The discussion was chaired by former Foreign Secretary Salman Haidar.



*The Chair, Amb. Salman Haidar, at the
Roundtable*

Ambassador Rajiv K. Bhatia, Director General of ICWA, welcomed the delegation and the wide cross-section of audience comprising former ambassadors, academics, research scholars, and students from O.P Jindal University.

Ambassador Salman Haidar remarked that discretion was ICRC's hallmark. He appreciated the new dimension of the ICRC's role in sensitizing the security forces of various countries including India. He underlined the strong relationship that ICRC had developed with the government of India, and rendering its humanitarian services beyond Kashmir.

Mr. Yves Daccord emphasized that the international civil society expected India to play a greater role in the international and humanitarian sphere. In his exposition, he discussed the changing nature of armed conflicts and specifically addressed three aspects. First, armed conflicts in the recent past had been internal and not international; second, the methods of warfare had radically changed and new technology like drones had come into play; and third, the aspect of 'distance' in new methods of warfare like cyber wars had rendered close combat obsolete. Speaking on 'Humanitarian Diplomacy', Mr. Daccord observed the growing salience of regional mechanisms in resolving conflicts and the noted that the trend of international interventions would register a decline.



Mr. Yves Daccord, DG, ICRC speaking at the Roundtable

Mr. Daccord conveyed that International Humanitarian Law required to be made more transparent with the changing nature of armed conflict. Although the Geneva Conventions and the Additional Protocols would suffice for most countries, there are certain ambiguities that need to be clarified. He also conveyed his reservations on the concept of humanitarian space, as it is difficult to translate such concepts from theory to reality. He insisted that humanitarian law must not be politicised and more discussion should be held with the United Nations Human Rights Council and the United Nations Security Council. He stated that ICRC focused purely on the humanitarian aspects of conflict zones, and does not involve in the political debate.

His presentation was followed by a Q & A session that deliberated on various related issues such as review and revision of International Humanitarian Law, the changing role of the ICRC and the scope of the ICRC's humanitarian diplomacy. The functioning of the International Criminal Court was also debated. A question was raised regarding the desirability of a



(L-R) Amb. Rajiv Bhatia, DG, ICWA, Ambassador Salman Haidar and Mr. Yves Daccord, DG, ICRC

permanent seat for India at the United Nations Security Council that would enable the country to shoulder its growing responsibilities as expected of it by the international community. Ambassador Haidar concluded the session stating that India must be prepared to assume a more active role in international humanitarian issues, and the strong relationship between the ICRC and India would contribute to the greater humanitarian cause. Ambassador Bhatia said in his concluding remarks that Mr. Daccord looked at the future with great foresight and clarity, and the topic of 'Humanitarian Diplomacy' had presented an interesting debate.
