

In accordance with the Agreement on Armed Forces and Border Troops, concluded on 30 Dec. 1991, it was decided to consider and solve the issue on the transference of the management of the General-Purpose Armed Forces in accordance with the national legislation of member states. On 14 Feb. 1992 the *Council of Defence Ministers* was established. In 1993 the Office of Commander-in-Chief of CIS Joint Armed Forces was reorganized in a Staff for Co-ordinating Military Co-operation. Its Chief of Staff is appointed by the Council of Heads of State.

On 24 Sept. 1993 Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Moldova, Russia, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan signed an agreement to form an *Economic Union*. Georgia and Turkmenistan signed later (14 and 23 Jan. 1994). Ukraine became an associated member on 15 April 1994. In Oct. 1994 a summit meeting established the *Inter-State Economic Committee (MEK)* to be based in Moscow. Members include all CIS states except Turkmenistan. The Committee's decisions are binding if voted by 80% of the membership. Russia commands 50% of the voting power; Ukraine 14%. The Committee's remit is to co-ordinate energy, transport and communications policies. A *Customs Union* to regulate payments between member states with non-convertible independent currencies and a regulatory *Economic Court* have also been established.

On 29 March 1996 Belarus, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Russia signed an agreement increasing their mutual economic and social integration by creating a *Community of Integrated States* (Tajikistan signed in 1998). The agreement established a Supreme Inter-Governmental Council comprising heads of state and government and foreign ministers, with a rotatory Chair, an integration committee of Ministers and an Inter-Parliamentary Committee.

On 2 April 1996 the Presidents of Belarus and Russia signed a treaty providing for political, economic and military integration, creating the nucleus of a *Community of Russia and Belarus*. The agreement establishes a Supreme Council comprising the Presidents, Prime Ministers and Speakers of both countries and the Chairman of the Executive Committee. A further treaty was signed on 22 May 1997, instituting common citizenship, common deployment of military forces and the harmonization of the two economies with a view to the creation of a common currency. The Community was later renamed the *Union of Belarus and Russia* and signed subsequent agreements on equal rights for its citizens and equal conditions for state and private entrepreneurship.

In March 1994 the CIS was accorded observer status in the UN.

Headquarters: 220000 Minsk, Kirava 17, Belarus.

Website: <http://www.cis.minsk.by>

Executive Secretary: Yurii Yarov (Russia).

Further Reading

Brzezinski, Z. and Sullivan, P. (eds.) *Russia and the Commonwealth of Independent States: Documents, Data and Analysis*. Armonk (NY), 1996

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Website: <http://www.iata.org>

Director-General: Giovanni Bisignani (Italy).

International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC)

The International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) is an impartial, neutral and independent organization whose exclusively humanitarian mission is to protect the lives and dignity of victims of war and internal violence and to provide them with assistance.

Established in 1863, the ICRC is at the origin of the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement and of international humanitarian law, notably the Geneva Conventions. As the promoter and guardian of international humanitarian law, the ICRC must encourage respect for the law. It does so by spreading knowledge of the humanitarian rules and by reminding parties to conflicts of their obligations.

The ICRC has a permanent mandate under international law to take impartial action for prisoners, the wounded and sick, and civilians affected by conflict.

With its HQ in Geneva, Switzerland, the ICRC is based in around 80 countries and has a total of more than 12,000 staff.

In situations of conflict the ICRC co-ordinates the response by national Red Cross and Red Crescent societies and their International Federation. It acts in consultation with all other organizations involved in humanitarian work.

The ICRC relies for its financing on voluntary contributions from States signatories to the Geneva Conventions, supranational organizations such as the European Union, and public and private sources. To obtain the necessary funding the ICRC launches annual appeals.

In 2004 ICRC delegates visited more than 570,000 people deprived of their freedom in some 80 countries. ICRC water, sanitation and construction projects catered for the needs of around 20m. people. The ICRC supported hospitals and health care facilities serving some 2.8m. people. It also provided essential household goods to more than 2.2m. people, food aid to 1.3m. people and assistance to another 1.1m. people in the form of sustainable food production and micro-economic initiatives.

Headquarters: 19 Avenue de la Paix, 1202 Geneva, Switzerland.

Website: <http://www.icrc.org>

President: Jakob Kellenberger (Switzerland).

Further Reading

Moorehead, Caroline, *Dunant's Dream: War, Switzerland and the History of the Red Cross*. HarperCollins, London, 1998

International Air Transport Association (IATA)

Founded in 1945 for inter-airline co-operation in promoting safe, reliable, secure and economical air services, IATA has over 230 members from more than 130 nations worldwide. IATA is the successor to the International Air Traffic Association, founded in The Hague in 1919, the year of the world's first international scheduled services.

International Confederation of Free Trade Unions (ICFTU)

Origin. The founding congress of the ICFTU was held in London in Dec. 1949 following the withdrawal of some Western trade unions from the World Federation of Trade Unions (WFTU), which had come under Communist control. The constitution, as amended, provides for co-operation with the UN and the ILO, and for