

(Mr. Negretto Cambiaso, Italy)

Please allow me to briefly touch upon another specific but still important point. In our view, the possibility of the continued existence of the Geneva Protocol of 1925 beyond the entry into force of the convention could well be discussed, especially as a means to safeguard the international community from future withdrawal of States from the convention. However, the question of whether reservations to the Geneva Protocol should be allowed to continue to exist is a different issue and should be considered separately. Such reservations, on the entry into force of the convention, would no longer be compatible with the new version of article I, which provides for an unconditional prohibition of use. It would seem contradictory to allow a State to commit itself to such a new and far-reaching prohibition, while maintaining at the same time reservations safeguarding its right to retaliate "in kind".

Gaps to be filled up are always to be found, when a historical phase is over and a new one appears, charged with great promise but also with unknown factors, casting implications not always easily foreseeable. The stability of the world belonging to the recent past was, to say the least, the result of a negative factor: the fear of a nuclear holocaust in case of a military conflict of vast proportions with neither winners nor losers.

With the end of East-West confrontations, reliance on nuclear weapons is bound to face drastic reductions. This is Italy's persuasion and I am glad to associate myself with the worldwide appreciation for the signature of the START Treaty in Moscow, that we consider a first important step towards greater and more ambitious goals. Other positive forces are taking shape today, first and foremost those represented by public opinion and the consent of the people. We have seen in recent days the extent of their effectiveness. There is a need for such emerging consensus to rest on updated international structures, on a global or regional basis.

The convention on the total prohibition of chemical weapons contains a number of important innovations, to be connected with a growing role of the organs of the international community, above States parties. Other opportunities are ahead of us in the field of multilateral disarmament, and I would like to confirm that my country has trust in the future role of this negotiating body, worthy of being strengthened and updated at the appropriate time, in terms both of its composition and future competences. In the meanwhile it would be useful to devote the efforts we usually make to putting forward our own views also to the understanding of everyone else's positions. This could help us in avoiding unnecessary and time-consuming procedural wrestling. We are willing to cooperate in this direction, and we are confident in the success of our future endeavours.