

(Cardinal Casaroli, Holy See)

prohibition of the development, production and stockpiling of chemical weapons and on their destruction, and to ensure the preparation of the convention", re-established the Ad hoc Committee entrusted with pushing that process ahead. It is the wish of the Holy See that your work, backed up by the results of the recent Paris Conference that brought together the signatory States of the Geneva Protocol of 1925 and other States, and stimulated by the request made to you to redouble your efforts as a matter of urgency, will be crowned with the success the world is awaiting as fast as possible. This result will be parallel to those that humanity also expects in the domain of nuclear weapons, remembering always the horrors for which chemical weapons have already been or can still be responsible, and the durability of their harmful effects, even decades after they have been used. On this point I think that no security argument can be reasonably put forward against the aim of complete and unreserved disarmament, while acknowledging the existence of many technical or legal problems in its execution. If cruelty and the involvement of the civilian population are characteristic to some extent of any type of modern weaponry, as far as chemical weapons are concerned, or those like them, the cruelty factor, one might say, is there in the pure state, that is without any of the corresponding advantages of a military nature - advantages which are debatable and in some cases unjustifiable - that are inherent in other types of weapon used for "deterrence".

There remains the question of an effective system of verification and control, a question which is just as important in all the other schemes for the complete elimination or the "progressive and balanced" reduction of weapons, to maintain an equal balance, particularly in the strategic area, which is still regarded as essential for safeguarding peace. On this problem your Conference is certainly able to provide a focus and a contribution that I think are particularly valuable.