

and violent and arbitrary acts, the moans of prisoners being ill-treated, the heart-rending cries of wounded children.

We must open our hearts to the silent lament of the starving child who realizes he will die.

This is why I am sure I can say that I speak for all those gathered here today when I launch, through you, distinguished Delegates, in the name of us all, an urgent and solemn appeal for all the States you represent and all the belligerents involved in all the conflicts everywhere in the world to abide strictly by the provisions of the Geneva Conventions, and to take all necessary precautions to spare non-combatants, protect the civilian population, respect prisoners, and collect and care for the wounded and sick without discrimination. For only by complying with humanitarian law in the midst of the fighting can the foundations of peace be laid.

*Res, non verba!*

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## FINAL ADDRESS BY Mr. FLAVIO COTTI

Mr. President of the International Committee of the Red Cross,  
Excellencies,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,

We have now come to the end of this Conference and it remains for me to sum up what has been accomplished here.

I should first like to note the excellent spirit of cooperation that has prevailed throughout our deliberations.

Your self-discipline has enabled us to steer clear of most of the hazards that might have undermined the atmosphere and thus jeopardized the success of this Conference.

Your determination from the start to seek out common ground and work together in a spirit of consensus has imbued the Final Declaration with particular force and meaning. Your approach has shown the urgency you attribute to the problem of protection for the victims of war. Yet words are not enough to counter the fearsome events that unfold daily before us. That, too, you have clearly understood and you have moreover evidenced your will to act, to take a

series of practical steps to strengthen implementation of the Geneva Conventions and their Additional Protocols.

You have also shown your firm desire to ensure that the work of this Conference is properly followed up, without creating new mechanisms but nevertheless allowing for us to remain in productive contact and give mutual consideration to ways and means of better coordinating humanitarian action.

We expected an awakening, a heightened awareness among political leaders. Now we can add to that a follow-up process that will help to increase the impact of this Conference upon public opinion and give tangible effect to the principles espoused here.

It is a source of great satisfaction to the Swiss Federal Council that its initiative in inviting the States to meet here has been so well received and understood. The victims of war look to us for an answer, and their cries of distress have reverberated within these walls throughout the last three days.

Have we done enough? Are we now prepared to go beyond the words we have pledged and tackle the situations we have described, so as to strengthen international humanitarian law in actual practice?

The answer is obvious; it encourages us to pursue our efforts to increase protection for the victims of war.

These three days of absorbing discussion have enabled the international community to take up once again a dialogue between States on purely humanitarian considerations; we have given priority to those considerations, and have firmly relegated our political quarrels to second place.

This dialogue has highlighted the determination of all States finally to meet the challenge of mounting violence and cruelty. As United Nations Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali said from this very podium, "it is always at these troubled moments in history that the conscience of the world revolts and, raising its voice above the conflicts and the hatreds, proclaims its faith in the individual".

Together we have uttered this call for humanity, and together we have honoured the hope that springs eternal in all human beings even in the darkest hours.

It is now up to us to give substance to the ideas enshrined in the Declaration, to translate the mandate you have entrusted to the Swiss government into action.

Next year Switzerland will accordingly convene a meeting of intergovernmental experts. We will consult you beforehand about the procedure and agenda for the first meeting of this open-ended group.

In the meantime, we will distribute the text of the Final Declaration to all governments, to the United Nations and to the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement. Thank you.

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*ICRC translation of the original French text.*