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Interventions of the Cardinal Secretary of State in the 74th Session of the United Nations General Assembly

Intervention of the Cardinal Secretary of State at the High-Level Meeting on Multilateral Action in Favour of the Protection of Rainforests (23 September 2019)

Intervention of the Cardinal Secretary of State at the High-Level Ministerial Event on Syria (24 September 2019)

Intervention of the Cardinal Secretary of State at the XI Conference to Facilitate the Entry into Force of the “Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty” (25 September 2019)

Intervention of the Cardinal Secretary of State at the High-Level Plenary Meeting to commemorate and promote the International Day for the Total Elimination of Nuclear Weapons

The following are the addresses given by Cardinal Secretary of State Pietro Parolin, head of the Holy See delegation, in recent days during the 74th Session of the United Nations General Assembly, which took place in New York from 23 to 26 September 2019 on the theme “Combating climate change, and sustainability”:

Intervention of the Cardinal Secretary of State at the High-Level Meeting on Multilateral Action in Favour of the Protection of Rainforests (23 September 2019)

**His Eminence Cardinal Pietro Parolin, Secretary of State of the Holy See
Head of the Delegation of the Holy See to the Seventy-Fourth Session
of the United Nations General Assembly
High-Level Meeting on Multilateral Action in Favour of the Protection of Rainforests**

Honourable Presidents, Prime Ministers, and Chancellors, Distinguished Panellists, Dear Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is an honour to participate in this High-Level Meeting convened to prompt urgent and lasting action to protect our rainforests.

We all recognize how important forests are for the whole world and indeed for the very future of humanity: they are the world's most reliable renewable resource and are essential for integral human development. At a time of increasing urbanization, their irreplaceable importance is often taken for granted and underestimated, which is why education is crucial so that people will regard them not merely as resources to be harnessed, but also as a sanctuary to be cultivated and constantly replenished. The urgency of this task of protection and education is increasingly obvious, as the rapid destruction of forests risks the loss of species and vital relationships that could end up altering the entire ecosystem.

Great human suffering arises from the wanton destruction of forests. The impact falls mainly on those who depend on forests for their home, livelihood, cultural heritage and social structures. Care for our common home, and care for our brothers and sisters in that home, must go together. We need an integral ecology and integral development, balancing the responsible use of forests for economic and social development with protecting and preserving them for the good of those who depend on and care for them, and for the good of humanity and future generations. Decisions to improve the management of our forests must be undertaken with the full and meaningful participation of those whose rights, values and lives will be most impacted.

In two weeks, on October 6, Pope Francis will gather in the Vatican a Synod of Bishops from all over the world for the Amazonian Region which will be focused principally on the ecclesial and pastoral challenges of the area, with particular attention given to indigenous peoples living there and the human, ecological, social and economic issues that are impacting the region and, indeed, humanity. Several other important ecosystems and vast biomes also face serious threats, such as the Congo Basin, the rainforests in Southeast Asia, as well as national forests and vegetation covers.

Earlier this month, I was with Pope Francis in Madagascar, which has lost 21 percent of its total forest since 2001. In a meeting with national leaders, civil society representatives, and the diplomatic corps accredited in Antananarivo, he spoke passionately about how protecting our forests must comprise part of integral development and care for our common home.

"Your lovely island of Madagascar," he said, "is rich in plant and animal biodiversity, yet this treasure is especially threatened by excessive deforestation. ... The deterioration of that biodiversity compromises the future of the country and of the earth, our common home." Several destructive activities, he noted, are reluctantly done by poor inhabitants to ensure their survival. He therefore underlined that to protect the environment, jobs must be created to help them emerge from poverty. "There can be no true ecological approach or effective efforts to safeguard the environment," he stated, "without the attainment of a social justice capable of respecting the right to the common destination of earth's goods, not only of present generations, but also of those yet to come."

The crisis of the rapid destruction of our forests, especially our rainforests, is not just environmental, but also social and above all ethical. Strategies to address it without delay demand an integrated, multilateral approach that combats poverty and restores dignity to the excluded, at the same time as it protects this precious, indispensable and endangered gift.

Thank you very much.

Intervention of the Cardinal Secretary of State at the High-Level Ministerial Event on Syria (24 September 2019)

His Eminence Cardinal Pietro Parolin, Secretary of State of the Holy See

**Head of the Delegation of the Holy See to the Seventy-Fourth Session
of the United Nations General Assembly
High-Level Ministerial Event on Syria**

Madam High Representative,

I would like to express my gratitude to the European Union for organizing today's event and appreciation for its various initiatives, especially the Brussels Conferences, which aim at finding a lasting political resolution to the conflict in Syria. The Holy See continues to follow with great concern this tragedy that for more than eight years now has afflicted the Syrian people, creating a dramatic humanitarian situation. It is in this context that Pope Francis wrote to President Bashar al-Assad at the end of June.

The Holy See has always insisted on the need to strictly adhere to the principles of international humanitarian law and to seek a viable political solution to end the conflict, overcoming partisan interests, and to respect the rights and aspirations of the Syrian population. This must be accomplished with the tools of diplomacy, dialogue, negotiation and with the involvement of the international community.

With regard to the suffering of the civilian population, the Holy See would like to emphasize three aspects:

1. that the imposed sanctions also create heavy burdens for the civilian population. In fact, charitable organizations working in the field have stressed repeatedly the harmful effect of these sanctions on civilians, asking that they be repealed;
2. the problem of refugee return and reconciliation. The Holy See invites the international community to sustain and encourage their voluntary and safe return, and that of internally displaced people;
3. that Christians and religious minorities have always had a specific role in the social fabric of the Middle East. Their presence must be supported and encouraged as a contribution to social cohesion as well as to the necessary reconciliation process. As Pope Francis stressed in his last speech to the Diplomatic Corps accredited to the Holy See: "It is extremely important that Christians have a place in the future of the region". The Holy See hopes that "political authorities will not fail to ensure their security and all else needed for them to continue to dwell in the countries of which they are full citizens, and to contribute to their growth."^[1]

The Holy See strongly encourages the international community "not to neglect the many needs of the victims of this crisis, and above all to set aside special interests in order to be at the service of peace, and to bring an end to war."^[2]

After eight painful years of conflict, it is necessary, indeed urgent, to overcome the political stagnation and to have the courage to seek new paths of dialogue and new solutions, with a spirit of realism and a concern for those involved. Not only is the stability of the Middle East at stake, but the very future of young people, many born and raised outside their own country, who are often deprived of educational opportunities and lack the basic necessities to live. Too often, they become easy prey to criminality and radicalization. This is a question of dignity and of civility.

I wish to assure you that the Holy See, and the Catholic Church in general, will maintain their commitment to encouraging the search for viable solutions to the crisis and will continue to pay attention to the humanitarian situation, providing aid in favour of the peoples affected by the conflict in Syria and of the refugees, together with the communities that host them, without any distinction on the basis of religious or ethnic identity, for those who need help.

Thank you, Madam High Representative.

[1] Pope Francis, Address to the Diplomatic Corps accredited to the Holy See, 7 January 2019.

[2] Pope Francis, Address of to the participants at the working meeting on the crisis in Syria and neighbouring countries, 14 September 2018.

Intervention of the Cardinal Secretary of State at the XI Conference to Facilitate the Entry into Force of the “Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty” (25 September 2019)

**His Eminence Cardinal Pietro Parolin, Secretary of State of the Holy See
Head of the Delegation of the Holy See to the Seventy-Fourth Session
of the United Nations General Assembly
XI Conference to Facilitate the Entry into Force of the
Comprehensive Nuclear Test Ban Treaty**

Mr. President,

The Holy See ratified and adheres to the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT) as an expression of its longstanding conviction that a ban on nuclear tests, nuclear non-proliferation and nuclear disarmament “are closely linked and must be achieved as quickly as possible under effective international control.”[1] Due to the importance the Holy See attributes to the CTBT as an essential part of multilateral efforts to advance peace and global security, each further year without the entry into force of the Treaty is a stark reminder that the promise and hope brought by the Treaty has yet to become reality. The Holy See is, therefore, pleased to take part in this Conference – and thereby confirms once more that every single step, all efforts and discussions to bring about the entry into force of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty has the full support of the Holy See.

My Delegation is pleased to join others in reiterating our urgent appeal to the remaining States whose ratification is necessary for the Treaty to enter into force to move towards ratification. In so doing, these States have an opportunity to demonstrate wisdom, courageous leadership and a commitment to peace and the common good of all.

The entry into force of the CTBT is all the more imperative when one considers the contemporary threats to peace, from the continuing challenges of nuclear proliferation to the major modernization of nuclear weapons arsenals of some of the Nuclear Weapons States. Both nuclear proliferation and new modernization programs are contrary to the fundamental principles of the CTBT and, more importantly, they undermine international security. Furthermore, as Pope Francis has noted, “the escalation of the arms race continues unabated and the price of modernizing and developing weaponry, not only nuclear weapons, represents a considerable expense for nations. As a result, the real priorities facing our human family, such as the fight against poverty, the promotion of peace, the undertaking of educational, ecological and healthcare projects, and the development of human rights, are relegated to second place”.[2]

Mr. President,

While being realistic about the challenges involved in achieving a world free of nuclear weapons, the difficulties posed by the *status quo ante* of growing tensions, continued proliferation and modernization programs are far more daunting. Nuclear arms offer a false sense of security. The uneasy peace promised by nuclear deterrence has time and time again proved to be illusory. Nuclear weapons cannot create a stable and secure world. A durable peace and international security cannot be founded on mutually assured destruction or on the threat of annihilation.

Pope Francis has in fact made it clear that this nuclear escalation is morally unacceptable: “Nuclear deterrence and the threat of mutually assured destruction cannot be the basis for an ethics of fraternity and peaceful

coexistence”.[3] Speaking at an international symposium in 2017, His Holiness voiced grave concern over the catastrophic humanitarian and environmental effects of nuclear weapons use and noted the risk of an accidental detonation as a result of error of any kind.[4]

Nuclear tests involve the substantial and uncontrolled release of radioactive materials directly into the environment. They have resulted in the largest cumulative dose of man-made radiation unleashed thus far upon populations and the global environment.[5] As Pope Francis has said “the natural environment is a collective good, the patrimony of all humanity and the responsibility of everyone. If we make something our own, it is only to administer it for the good of all. If we do not, we burden our consciences with the weight of having denied the existence of others”.[6]

The non-proliferation regime must work as tirelessly for a comprehensive nuclear-test ban as it does for nuclear disarmament. For that reason, the Holy See signed and ratified the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons with the aim of moving beyond nuclear deterrence to a world entirely free of nuclear weapons,[7] and affirmed that nuclear weapons are arms of mass and environmental destruction.[8]

Mr. President,

The peace-of-a-sort that is based on a balance of power, with threats and counter-threats, and ultimately fear is an unstable and false peace. In order to respond adequately to the challenges of the twenty-first century, it is essential to replace this logic of fear and mistrust with an ethic of responsibility, and so foster a climate of trust which values multilateral dialogue through consistent and responsible cooperation among all the members of the international community. This requires, as Pope Francis told the diplomatic corps accredited to the Holy See earlier this year, that the international community recognize that an “indispensable condition for the success of multilateral diplomacy is the good will and good faith of the parties, their readiness to deal with one another fairly and honestly, and their openness to accepting the inevitable compromises arising from disputes”.[9]The norms embodied in the UN Charter, international humanitarian law, disarmament and arms control instruments, and other elements of international law represent an indispensable commitment to cooperative security and a juridical embodiment of this global ethic of responsibility that is now sorely needed.

At a time of increased tensions, the entry into force of the CTBT would be an essential confidence-building measure and an important manifestation of a commitment to this ethic of responsibility. More than two decades is too long a wait to demonstrate this commitment.

Thank you, Mr. President.

[1] Cf. Declaration of the Holy See attached to the Instrument of adhesion to the CTBT, 24 September 1996.

[2] Cf. Pope Francis, Message to the International Symposium on the Prospects for a World Free of Nuclear Weapons and for Integral Disarmament, 10 November 2017.

[3] Cf. Pope Francis, Message on the occasion of the Vienna Conference on the Humanitarian Impact of Nuclear Weapons, 7 December 2014.

[4] Cf. Pope Francis, Message to the International Symposium on the Prospects for a World Free of Nuclear Weapons and for Integral Disarmament. 10 November 2017.

[5] Cf., UNSCEAR 2000 Report to the General Assembly, Exposures to the public from man-made sources of radiation. Volume I, Annex C, pp. 158-180. United Nations, New York, 2000.

[6] Cf. Pope Francis, Encyclical Letter *Laudato Si'*, §95. 24 May 2015.

[7] Cf. Pope Francis, Message to the United Nations Conference to Negotiate a Legally Binding Instrument to Prohibit Nuclear Weapons, Leading Towards their Total Elimination. 23 March 2017.

[8] Cf. Statement of the Holy See to the 62nd General Conference of the International Atomic Energy Agency, 17 September 2018.

[9] Pope Francis, Address to the members of the diplomatic corps accredited to the Holy See for the traditional exchange of New Year greetings, 7 January 2019.

Intervention of the Cardinal Secretary of State at the High-Level Plenary Meeting to commemorate and promote the International Day for the Total Elimination of Nuclear Weapons

**Statement by His Eminence Cardinal Pietro Parolin, Secretary of State of the Holy See
Head of the Delegation of the Holy See to the Seventy-Fourth Session
of the United Nations General Assembly
High-Level Plenary Meeting to commemorate and promote the
International Day for the Total Elimination of Nuclear Weapons**

Mr. President,

The Holy See Mission welcomes the occasion of this High-Level Plenary Meeting to reiterate its full support for the total elimination of nuclear weapons. In view of the current absence of negotiations aimed at achieving even the most modest of steps toward this vital global security objective, security for each of us and for everyone in the global community of nations, this Plenary is particularly timely. It is of critical importance that global leaders, at the highest levels, speak out forcefully to urge those States that must take the next steps toward the elimination of nuclear weapons to initiate action now, not at some vague future date and not waiting for some “ideal” international peace and security situation to come about.

In November 2017, speaking at a symposium held in the Vatican, Pope Francis made clear the position of the Holy See on nuclear weapons, when he said, “the threat of their use, as well as their very possession, is to be firmly condemned. For they exist in the service of a mentality of fear that affects not only the parties in conflict but the entire human race. International relations cannot be held captive to military force, mutual intimidation, and the parading of stockpiles of arms. Weapons of mass destruction, particularly nuclear weapons, create nothing but a false sense of security. They cannot constitute the basis for peaceful coexistence between members of the human family, which must rather be inspired by an ethics of solidarity.”

The Holy See notes with regret, *inter alia*, the lapse of the Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces Treaty, the failure to achieve entry into force of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty, the inability of the Conference on Disarmament even to begin negotiations on a ban on the production of fissile material for nuclear weapons, the so-called “modernization” of nuclear weapons and delivery systems, and the instabilities at play in the implementation of the Joint Comprehensive Program of Action. All of these are worrying signs of the continued erosion of multilateralism and of the ruled-based order.

The Holy See acknowledges with satisfaction the increasing number of States who have ratified the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons (TPNW), and encourages those States who have already signed it to ratify it as soon as possible. Only by engaging in sincere, honest and effective dialogue, remains the hope that other States will build the trust needed to sign and ratify this instrument. We believe that the Treaty is an important step toward a nuclear-free world, and complements the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT). The TPNW is a fruit of the efforts of many States and other stakeholders to promote greater awareness and deeper understanding of the serious humanitarian consequences and environmental disasters that would

result from the use of nuclear weapons.

Mr. President,

One might be tempted to lose hope in face of the setbacks, the impasse or the very slow progress in the disarmament agenda, in particular in the area of nuclear disarmament. However, perseverance and determination should characterize our common efforts to move toward the elimination of nuclear weapons. We must make every effort to avoid dismantling the international architecture of arms control, especially in the field of weapons of mass destruction.

The Holy See encourages the relevant States to take timely action to extend the New START Treaty beyond its scheduled expiration in February 2020. It continues to hope that the same relevant States come back to the table to revive talks on the INF, even if the Treaty has lapsed. The Conference on Disarmament, the UN Disarmament Commission and all instances concerned must take concrete steps to preclude the weaponization of outer space with the attendant risks to systems vital to so many aspects of our life on Earth. The Middle East should not be put at further risk of destabilization in dealing with the Joint Comprehensive Program of Action and other weapons-related challenges. My Delegation also urges restraint and concrete steps to deescalate the nuclear threats in the Korean Peninsula and the surrounding territories, with efforts toward its complete denuclearization. We must work tirelessly to restore any possibility of dialogue and to fight the trust-deficits, which unfortunately are characterize the current situation of disarmament, as well as in the building of our common and collective security.

Mr. President,

In November, His Holiness will visit Hiroshima and Nagasaki. He will not fail to make the strongest appeal possible for concerted steps towards the total elimination of nuclear weapons. We look forward to making a contribution at the Tenth Review Conference on the Treaty of Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons next year, which represents a very important opportunity for all its States Parties to work together for the aim of achieving the long term goal of a nuclear weapons free world and to rebuild dialogue and trust for our collective security.

Thank you, Mr. President.
