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INTERVENTO DELLA SANTA SEDE AL PRIMO COMITATO DELL'ASSEMBLEA GENERALE DELLE NAZIONI UNITE SUL TEMA DEL DISARMO

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Il 1° ottobre 2002, nel corso della LVII Sessione Ordinaria dell'Assemblea Generale dell'O.N.U., S.E. Mons. Renato R. Martino, Capo Delegazione della Santa Sede, ha preso la parola dinanzi al I Comitato sul tema "*General and Complete Disarmament*". Riportiamo qui di seguito il testo dell'intervento:

● INTERVENTO DI S.E. MONS. RENATO R. MARTINO

Mr. Chairman,

The Holy See congratulates you on your election as Chairman and my Delegation assures you of its cooperation in your leadership of this important committee.

The General Assembly has considered the theme of "General and complete disarmament" annually since 1959. The threats to international peace and security faced by the world today are in some important respects different from the threats of 40 years ago.

When we met last year, the horror of the terrorist attacks on New York and Washington was fresh in our minds and our resolve to stamp out terrorism strong. While governments continue to be deeply concerned about terrorism, our role in this Committee is to ensure that the processes of disarmament continue.

The order imposed by the circumstances of the Cold War no longer exists, and our thinking on disarmament must reflect the new realities of today. For instance, by signing, on May 24, 2002, the *Strategic Offensive Reductions Treaty*, States that were once adversaries agreed to reduce the number of strategic nuclear warheads from 2,200 to 1,700 by the year 2012. While the reductions could have gone further and even though the Treaty would have been more reassuring if it provided for irreversible disarmament, transparency and effective verification, the agreement should be welcomed as a new sign of cooperation. The world awaits and in fact seriously needs more of the same.

Practical disarmament measures to consolidate peace, regional disarmament agreements, and especially the measures adopted to curb the illicit traffic in small arms and light weapons can be re-energized. These steps, along with the strengthening of the relationship between disarmament and development, can have tremendous effects by improving the conditions for human security throughout the world.

Mr. Chairman, the threats posed by biological and chemical weapons have received much attention, partly because rather small amounts of material can have such pervasive and devastating effects. All of us have seen the fear and hysteria that trace, but deadly amounts of anthrax can produce. Because these threats respect no borders, multilateral efforts towards their elimination are absolutely necessary. The world's security now depends on how well States can adapt to these new circumstances. It is a duty of the first-order.

During these next few months, the Fifth Review Conference of the *Biological Weapons Convention* (BWC) will re-convene to complete work on negotiating a legally binding verification protocol. The first session of this Review can hardly be termed a success.

A re-energization of this process is clearly called for, and this is the reason why the Holy See decided to accede to the BWC on 4 January 2002. As stated in the Holy See Declaration attached to the instrument of accession to the BWC "the tragic events of 11 September 2001 have led to a clearer and more widespread awareness of the need to build a culture of multilateral dialogue and a climate of trust between all the members of the human family. At this particular point in history, instruments of cooperation and prevention constitute one of the most effective safeguards in the face of heinous acts such as the use of biological weapons, capable of indiscriminately striking at innocent civilian populations".

When the BWC, prohibiting the development, production and stockpiling of bio-weapons was opened for signature in 1972, it was the first-ever arms control convention to completely ban a whole class of weapons.

However, it lacked mechanisms for monitoring or verifying compliance. In 1995, work began to draft concrete measures to ensure countries comply with the Convention. The setback that occurred at the Review last year must be overcome because the future Biological Weapons prohibition regime must be strengthened.

The 145 States Parties to the BWC should agree on a comprehensive list of measures, perhaps to be implemented in stages, that will ensure a strengthening of the BWC through increased transparency and an increase in potential detection and deterrence of prohibited activities. Such an approach will build confidence in the BWC.

In the past year, two important conferences — involving the *Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty* (CTBT) and the *Non-Proliferation Treaty* (NPT) — were held in the nuclear weapons field. Here again, troubling signs of discord were evident.

As stated in the Holy See Declaration attached to the instrument of accession to the CTBT on 13 June 2001, "the Holy See is convinced that in the sphere of nuclear weapons, the banning of tests and of the further development of these weapons, disarmament and non-proliferation are closely linked and must be achieved as quickly as possible under effective international controls".

A major step forward was taken when the CTBT was opened for signature in 1996. When the Conference on Facilitating Entry-into-Force of the CTBT was held in 2001, 161 States had signed and 87 had ratified the Treaty. But now the momentum appears to have stalled. While all nations and peoples must be grateful that a moratorium on testing is still holding, the resistance to achieving the requisite number of ratifications threatens a collapse of the architecture of the non-proliferation regime that has painstakingly been built over many years.

The second conference, the First Preparatory Conference for the 2005 NPT Review, also revealed the stalled nature of nuclear disarmament. At the 2000 NPT Review, the Nuclear Weapons States pledged "an unequivocal undertaking to accomplish the total elimination of their nuclear arsenals". A program of 13 Practical Steps was

adopted for systematic and progressive nuclear disarmament. But the hopes raised in 2000 were dashed in 2002 when it became clear that the Nuclear Weapons States are not adhering to the 13 Steps.

The ABM Treaty, now abandoned, and the CTBT were both integral to the 13 Steps. How can that which was agreed to in 2000 be cast aside just two years later? It must not be forgotten that genuine multilateral efforts are required to achieve nuclear disarmament. These, by their very nature, possess the potential to guarantee universal and permanent norms which bind all States. In this respect, the NPT remains the centrepiece of the global nuclear non-proliferation regime and the value of the NPT depends on all parties honouring their obligations. It plays a critical role in efforts to prevent the spread of nuclear weapons, especially to terrorists and States that support them.

Mr. Chairman, the concern of the Holy See increases as we see the non-proliferation regime, with the NPT as its cornerstone, in disarray. The old policies of nuclear deterrence, which prevailed during the time of the Cold War, must lead now to concrete disarmament measures, based on dialogue and multilateral negotiation, which are essential values in the disarmament process. Through the instruments of international law, they facilitate the peaceful resolution of controversies, help better mutual understanding and foster a climate of trust, cooperation and respect between all States. In this way they promote the effective affirmation of the culture of life and peace, which is based upon the values of responsibility, solidarity and dialogue.

The Holy See has stated in this Committee many times and repeats now: There can be no moral acceptance of military doctrines that embody the permanence of nuclear weapons. They are incompatible with the peace we seek for the 21st century; they cannot be justified. These weapons are instruments of death and destruction.

The cooperation among governments, including the military, humanitarian organizations and other representatives of civil society in implementing the Landmines Convention has been exemplary in building up trust and goodwill among all concerned groups. The physical or ideological distance between concerned groups or similar difficulties facing disarmament activities need not be an insurmountable obstacle. "In this era of interdependence, it is no longer tolerable to condemn, through inaction, entire populations to live in fear and precariousness" (Address of the Holy See to the *Fourth Meeting of Parties to the Ottawa Convention*, Geneva, 19 September 2002, n. 8).

Mr. Chairman, this Committee has done valuable work over many years in raising the norms and standards for disarmament in all its aspects. Though the cycles of history bring with them both advances and retreats, we must keep our minds focused on our goal of reducing the causes of war. Pope John Paul II's *World Day of Peace* Message for 2002, entitled "No Peace without Justice, No Justice without Forgiveness", expressed a great hope, "based on the conviction that evil, the *mysterium iniquitatis*, does not have the final word in human affairs" (n.1).

The techniques of mediation, negotiation and verification are all being advanced today. They provide a basis of hope for humanity. These are the steps we must support in the continuing quest to eliminate the weapons of war.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

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