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INTERVENTO DELLA SANTA SEDE ALLA PRIMA COMMISSIONE DELLA 62ma SESSIONE DELL'ASSEMBLEA GENERALE DELL'O.N.U.

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Pubblichiamo di seguito l'intervento che l'Osservatore Permanente della Santa Sede, l'Arcivescovo S.E. Mons. Celestino Migliore, ha pronunciato ieri a New York, davanti alla Prima Commissione della 62ma Sessione dell'Assemblea Generale dell'O.N.U. sul tema: "*General debate on all disarmament and international security agenda items*":

• INTERVENTO DI S.E. MONS. CELESTINO MIGLIORE

Mr Chairman,

My delegation congratulates you on your election as Chairman of this Committee and assures you and the entire Bureau of its cooperation.

It is a special pleasure to welcome Ambassador Sergio Duarte at the helm of the Office for Disarmament Affairs. His vast experience in the disarmament field augurs well for the fulfillment of his new responsibilities, at a time when the Secretary-General, with the support of the General Assembly, seeks to revitalize the disarmament and non-proliferation agenda.

A notable event this year was the 50th anniversary of the entry into force of the Statute of the International Atomic Energy Agency. As the use of nuclear power expands in various parts of the world, the IAEA becomes all the more important. It needs and deserves stronger support from the international community. The Holy See, a founding member of the Agency, continues to fully support its goals, convinced that the IAEA plays a key role in fostering non-proliferation of nuclear arms, progressive nuclear disarmament, and the use of peaceful and safe nuclear technology for a development respectful of the environment and ever mindful of the most disadvantaged populations.

Especially at this tense moment in international relations, the world needs to be able to place confidence in the findings of the IAEA that no State Party to the Non-Proliferation Treaty is abusing its legitimate right to develop

nuclear energy for peaceful uses to produce nuclear weapons. All the tools of diplomacy must be used to defuse crises concerning attempts by some countries to acquire nuclear weapons capabilities and to dissuade others from ever taking such a dangerous road. Belligerence by anyone would only worsen a delicate situation and could inadvertently lead to conflagration with immense additional suffering on a humanity already overburdened with the ravages of war.

On the other hand, continued failure to bring to a successful conclusion negotiations leading to the progressive elimination of nuclear weapons and plans to modernize existing nuclear arsenals jeopardize the viability of the Treaty. The nuclear weapons States have a particular responsibility to lead the way to a nuclear weapons-free world. Nuclear disarmament and nuclear non-proliferation can either mutually re-enforce or mutually weaken each other. Both are an imperative for the full implementation of the provisions of the NPT. There cannot be one without the other.

Preparations for the 2010 Review Conference of the NPT have begun. In spite of a disappointing 2005 Review Conference, we should not lose sight of the great accomplishment of the 2000 Review Conference, whose Final Document continues to represent legally and politically binding guidelines for the full implementation of the NPT. At a delicate time like this, we appeal to all parties to show "good faith" the NPT calls for in order to advance negotiations. We appeal as well to both the political authorities and civil society to reject nuclear weapons.

The entry into force of the Comprehensive Nuclear Test Ban Treaty and the start of negotiations for a verifiable ban on the production of fissile materials are long overdue. These two steps would show a waiting world that all governments are sincere in trying to stop a new nuclear arms race. It is not so much technical deficiency holding us back more than the lack of political will.

Here the recognition of the values of morality would play an instrumental role in effecting political will. The Holy See has said many times in this Committee that nuclear weapons contravene every aspect of humanitarian law. They are an affront to our stewardship of the environment, in as much as they can destroy life on the planet and the planet itself. They must be done away with. By holding resolutely to these convictions, the Holy See hopes to awaken in the hearts of all people of "good faith" a renewed determination to ensure that never again will the horrors of nuclear war be visited upon humanity.

Moreover, the danger of a nuclear device ending in the hands of terrorists is real and present. Thus the Holy See welcomed the recommendation of The Weapons of Mass Destruction Commission that the General Assembly convene a World Summit on disarmament, non-proliferation and terrorist use of weapons of mass destruction, and favours that it be held in 2009. The time to prepare for such an historic Summit is now.

Mr Chairman,

This Committee is called to work hard to address not only the nuclear danger but also other issues, such as conventional disarmament, the arms trade, chemical and biological weapons. Its work in these areas has our fullest support.

My delegation expects this Committee to take further steps on arms control in the field of conventional weapons, including small arms and light weapons. My delegation shares the grave concern of conflict-ridden countries, whose experience tells us that illicit trade in arms, their accumulation and illicit production are a hindrance to the peaceful settlement of disputes, drive tensions into armed conflicts and are a key factor in prolonging them, thus heavily compromising peace and development. Moreover, these weapons play a role in almost every conflict and are often used in violations of human rights and of international humanitarian law. It was in this spirit that last year the Holy See supported the adoption of the draft resolution *Towards an Arms Trade Treaty: establishing common international standards for the import, export and transfer of convention weapons* (res. 61/89). It is hoped that this objective gain greater momentum in the coming years.

Finally, armed conflicts have shown irrefutable evidence of the humanitarian disasters caused by cluster munitions, especially on the civilian population, thus violating international humanitarian law. The Holy See

continues to support the urgency to start negotiations, preferably within the CCW framework, for a legally binding instrument on cluster munitions and, in the meantime, for a moratorium of their production, distribution and use.

The Committee must summon all its resources of strength and will to give leadership in overcoming daunting challenges. We must be animated by the values of responsibility, solidarity and dialogue to light the way forward.

Thank you, Mr Chairman.

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