



SALA STAMPA DELLA SANTA SEDE **BOLLETTINO**

HOLY SEE PRESS OFFICE BUREAU DE PRESSE DU SAINT-SIÈGE PRESSEAMT DES HEILIGEN STUHLS
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STATEMENT OF THE HOLY SEE AT THE U.N. REVIEW CONFERENCE OF THE PARTIES TO THE TREATY ON THE NON-PROLIFERATION OF NUCLEAR WEAPONS (NEW YORK MAY 6, 2010)

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Here below the Statement of H.E. Archbishop Celestino Migliore, Permanent Observer of the Holy See to the UN, on "2010 Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons", given at the UN Headquarters on May th 2010:

Mr. President,

Allow me to congratulate you on your election to the presidency of the 2010 Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty Review Conference. My Delegation assures you of its full support in your endeavours towards a successful outcome of the Conference.

At the outset, I would like to read the message that Pope Benedict XVI has sent to this Conference: *"The process towards a coordinated and secure nuclear disarmament is strictly connected to the full and rapid fulfillment of the relevant international commitments. Peace, in fact, rests on trust and on respect for promises made, not merely on the equilibrium of forces. In this spirit, I encourage the initiatives that seek progressive disarmament and the creation of zones free of nuclear weapons, with a view to their complete elimination from the planet. I exhort all those participating in the New York meeting to overcome the burdens of history and to weave patiently a political and economic web of peace in order to foster integral human development and the authentic aspirations of peoples".*

Nuclear weapons have remained a central item on the disarmament agenda for decades now. These weapons continue to exist in huge quantities, some of them in a state of operational readiness. They are no longer just for deterrence but have become entrenched in the military doctrines of the major powers. The danger of proliferation has escalated. The threat of nuclear terrorism has become real.

In this context the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) remains a valid and indispensable multilateral

instrument binding States Parties in its totality and particularly in its call to negotiations "*in good faith on effective measures relating to cessation of the nuclear arms race at an early date and to nuclear disarmament, and on a treaty on general and complete disarmament under strict and effective international control*" (Art. VI).

One of the challenges is the fact that nuclear-weapon States, 40 years after the NPT entered into force, have still to pursue in a clear and effective way these negotiations mandated by Art. VI of the NPT, to comply with the ruling of the International Court of Justice that negotiations leading to the elimination of nuclear weapons must be concluded and to take the steps adopted in the year 2000 for their complete elimination. Nuclear disarmament is one of the pillars of the Treaty which ultimately conditions the other two for a simple fact: as long as nuclear weapons exist they will allow and even encourage proliferation and there will always be a risk that nuclear material produced for the peaceful use of energy will be turned into weapons. The effectiveness of our concerns and endeavours to put an end to nuclear proliferation needs to be supported by a strong moral authority. Moral authority comes first and foremost from respecting and delivering on promises and commitments.

The military doctrines which continue to rely on nuclear weapons as a means of security and defence or even measure of power, *de facto* slow down nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation processes. The Holy See strongly advocates for transparent, verifiable, global and irreversible nuclear disarmament and for addressing seriously the issues of nuclear strategic arms, the tactical ones and their means of delivery. In this context, the Holy See welcomes the new Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty. The entry into force of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT) is of the highest priority. The universal banning of nuclear explosions will inhibit the development of nuclear weapons, and thus will contribute to nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation and will prevent further damage to the environment. In this direction, it is crucial to halt the production and transfer of fissile material for weapons. The immediate commencement of a Fissile Material Cut-Off Treaty (FMCT) is a matter of responsibility and must not be further delayed. The Holy See encourages also nuclear-weapon States and those which possess such weapons to ratify the respective Protocols to the Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zones Treaties and strongly supports efforts to establish such a zone in the Middle East. Nuclear-weapon-free zones are the best example of trust, confidence and affirmation that peace and security is possible without possessing nuclear weapons.

The international community needs to seek new approaches to nuclear disarmament. It is a fact that no force on earth will be able to protect civil populations from the explosion of nuclear bombs, which could cause as many as millions of immediate deaths. Nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation are indeed essential also from a humanitarian point of view. Every step on the non-proliferation and disarmament agenda must be geared towards ensuring the security and survival of humanity and must build on principles of the preeminent and inherent value of human dignity and the centrality of the human person, which constitute the basis of international humanitarian law. Important lessons can be learned from the Convention on Cluster Munitions and the Mine Ban Treaty, which both demonstrate that it is possible to make a real difference for human security by breaking old habits.

Mr. President, the world has arrived at an opportune moment to begin addressing in a systematic way the legal, political and technical requisites for a nuclear weapons free world. For this reason, preparatory work should begin as soon as possible on a convention or framework agreement leading to the phased elimination of nuclear weapons.

Thank you, Mr. President.

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