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Pubblichiamo di seguito l'intervento che Mons. Ettore Balestrero, Sotto-Segretario per i Rapporti con gli Stati, ha pronunciato ieri a Vienna, nel corso della 54a Conferenza Generale dell'Agenzia Internazionale per l'Energia Atomica:

● INTERVENTO DI MONS. ETTORE BALESTRERO

Mr President,

1. I have the honour of conveying to you, Mr President, to the Director General of the International Atomic Energy Agency, Dr. Yukiya Amano, and to all the distinguished participants in this 54th General Conference of the IAEA the best wishes and cordial greetings of His Holiness Pope Benedict XVI, who "*encourages the efforts of the international community to ensure progressive disarmament and a world free of nuclear weapons, whose presence alone threatens the life of the planet and the ongoing integral development of the present generation and of generations yet to come*" (Message for the Celebration of the World Day of Peace 2010, n. 11).

2. In the spirit of Pope Benedict's words, the Holy See is convinced that the IAEA can look back with satisfaction on what has been achieved since its foundation under the three pillars of its mandate: technology, safety and

verification. Still, many challenges have to be faced in the future. Many of these have been underlined by the Nuclear-Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT), the Review Conference of which we have recently celebrated and to which States Parties have recommitted themselves.

The Holy See regards the NPT as the cornerstone of the global nuclear non-proliferation regime, as the basis to pursue nuclear disarmament and as an important element for further development of nuclear energy applications for peaceful purposes. Since the NPT is the only multilateral legal instrument currently available, intended to bring about a nuclear weapons free world, it must never be allowed to be weakened.

3. The entry into force of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT) is also coming of the highest priority, as is the ratification of all States, in particular nuclear-weapon States, of the respective Protocols to the Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zones Treaties. In this regard, the Holy See restates its strong support for the 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 are possible without possessing nuclear weapons.

4. Humanity deserves no less than the full co-operation of all States in this important matter. Every step on the non-proliferation and disarmament agenda must be built on the 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. His Holiness Pope Benedict XVI wrote in his Message for the 2010 NPT Review 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 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".

Mr President,

5. Since its foundation, the International Atomic Energy Agency remains an irreplaceable point of reference for international co-operation in the use of nuclear energy for peaceful purposes and for integral human development as referred to above by Pope Benedict XVI. In this regard, the Holy See welcomes the Kingdom of Swaziland as a new Member State of the IAEA's family.

6. The Technical Cooperation Programme of the Agency is one of the principal instruments for transferring nuclear science and technology to Member States in order to promote social, economic and integral development. Its initiatives, when tailored to the needs of the recipient States and their partners in the context of national priorities, help to combat poverty and can thus contribute to a more peaceful solution of the serious problems facing humanity.

Nuclear and isotopic techniques have increasingly proved helpful in serving basic human needs and in addressing great challenges - especially in the developing world. The research activities and technical cooperation projects carried out in recent years or still in progress continue to yield encouraging results and indicate innovative ways of tackling problems which affect a great number of people in their daily lives. The efforts of the IAEA in this field are much appreciated and should continue in fruitful cooperation and partnership with the recipient countries.

Mr President,

7. These peaceful applications of nuclear techniques can in many ways make a significant contribution to responding to the most urgent concerns, for example, the management of drinking-water supplies, the production of crops which give an improved yield or have a greater salt tolerance in arid climates, the eradication of disease-bearing and otherwise harmful pests in an environmentally beneficial manner. Among other things,

they can be effectively used in the study of child malnutrition and in the diagnosis and treatment of diseases.

8. In this context, I wish to mention the particular role of radio-nuclides used in the diagnosis and treatment of malignant diseases. Radiation therapy is one of the fundamental treatments of cancer, and more than 50% of the patients diagnosed with this disease would benefit from that kind of therapy either applied alone or in conjunction with surgery and chemotherapy. Yet, in the developing world, more than half of the number of patients suffering from cancer will not have access to radiotherapy due to the lack of appropriate equipment and sufficiently trained staff with expertise in clinical and medical physics. Thus, the topic of this year's Scientific Forum is most relevant.

The Holy See appreciates the work and efforts of the IAEA and its partners in the planning and furthering of cancer-control programmes, which include the provision and upgrading of essential equipment, and the suitable training of medical doctors, physicists and technicians, as well as the worldwide exchange of relevant information. One of the main tasks of the IAEA has been to develop and refine standards and Codes of Practice in medical radiation dosimetry. The worldwide network of standard dosimetry laboratories provides calibration services to hospitals especially in the developing countries in order to assist their quality assurance programmes.

The Holy See would like to encourage the IAEA to continue to pursue and strengthen all these eminently important activities. In this context, the Holy See would like to single out the Programme of Action for Cancer Therapy (PACT), which aims at increasing its capacity to assist Member States in the tremendous task of combating cancer and creating regional centres of excellence for radiotherapy.

9. In conclusion, Mr Chairman, I would like to recall a phrase coined by the late Pope John Paul II on the concept of

"human ecology", which is another precondition for sustainable development: «Although people are rightly worried [...] about preserving the natural habitats of the various animal species threatened with extinction, [...] too little effort is made to safeguard the moral conditions for an authentic "human ecology"» (cf. Encyclical Centesimus annus, No. 38.). Pope Benedict XVI developed this by stating that "when human ecology is respected within society, environmental ecology also benefits.... The book of nature is one and indivisible; it includes not only the environment but also individual, family and social ethics. Our duties towards the environment flow from our duties towards the person, considered both individually and in relation to others" (Message for the Celebration of the World Day of Peace 2010, N. 12).

It is in this way that the Holy See views, and invites others to view, the International Atomic Energy Agency's contribution to *"peace, health and prosperity"*.

Thank you, Mr Chairman!

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