



**STATEMENT OF THE HOLY SEE
TO THE 60TH GENERAL CONFERENCE
OF THE INTERNATIONAL ATOMIC ENERGY AGENCY**

DELIVERED BY

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Mr. President,

I have the honour of conveying to you and to all the distinguished participants at this 60th General Conference of the International Atomic Energy Agency the best wishes and cordial greetings of His Holiness Pope Francis and would like to reiterate his call to the United Nations General Assembly on 25 September 2015, when he urged the international community “to work for a world free of nuclear weapons, in full application of the Non-Proliferation Treaty, in letter and spirit, with the goal of a complete prohibition of these weapons.” On that occasion, Pope Francis added, “An ethics and a law based on the threat of mutual destruction – and possibly the destruction of all mankind – are self-contradictory and an affront to the entire framework of the United Nations, which would end up as ‘nations united by fear and mistrust’.”

Mr President, on behalf of the Delegation of the Holy See, I congratulate you on your election as President of this distinguished Conference. I would like to take this opportunity also to express our appreciation and gratitude to Director General Yukiya Amano and to the Secretariat for their dedicated work to the benefit of the whole IAEA family.

On this occasion, the Holy See, along with various states, welcomes and congratulates Antigua and Barbuda, Barbados and Turkmenistan on becoming members of the IAEA.

Mr. President,

In order to respond adequately to the challenges of the twenty-first century, it is essential to replace fear and mistrust with an ethic of responsibility, and so foster a climate of trust which values multilateral dialogue through consistent and responsible cooperation between the members of the international community.

In this regard, the Holy See commends and supports all the activities of the IAEA which foster international cooperation in the use of nuclear technology for peaceful purposes and integral human development, and which prevent nuclear proliferation and contribute to nuclear disarmament. I will briefly address five aspects of IAEA’s important work:

- 1) Nuclear safety and security:

Mr. President,

After six decades of successfully confronting many challenges, including the disaster at Chernobyl thirty years ago and the accident at the Fukushima Daiichi nuclear power plant in 2011, the IAEA remains an indispensable agency for promoting nuclear safety and security.

Such severe accidents and their harmful consequences during recent decades have prompted many countries - and the nuclear industry, in particular - to take

concrete steps to strengthen the “safety culture” concept initiated by the International Safety Advisory Group investigating Chernobyl. With the IAEA assuming its long-standing leadership role, this safety culture has been further strengthened since the Fukushima accident. Yet there are still areas which require urgent attention. The commitment to safety and security has to be pursued tirelessly by all persons and organizations involved. Much more should be done to reduce the risk of accidents, nuclear terrorism, and the illicit spread of nuclear materials by better securing and regulating nuclear power plants, weapons-usable nuclear materials, and the millions of medical and commercial entities that work with radiological sources. UN Security Council Resolution 1540, the Nuclear Security Summits, the Nuclear Terrorism Convention, and the IAEA’s Codes of Conduct on the Safety and Security of Radioactive Sources and on Research Reactors are some of the important mechanisms already in place. But more must be done to achieve a more comprehensive, binding and effective global system for nuclear safety and security.

2) Sustainable and integral human development:

Mr. President,

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 address pressing problems of poverty, health, and environmental degradation,¹ and can thus contribute to a more peaceful solution of the serious problems facing humanity. Peaceful applications of nuclear technologies allow many States to come closer to the achievement of their development goals and for responsible stewardship of our human and natural resources. Nuclear technologies are improving agriculture, pollution control, water management, nutrition and food safety, and infectious disease control. The invaluable contribution the IAEA is making in fighting cancer, especially in some of the world’s poorest countries, is especially noteworthy. These and other efforts are improving the quality of life for millions of people.

Clearly, IAEA’s contributions to sustainable development deserves to be supported and enhanced in order to meet the many challenges that remain - especially in the developing world. The research activities and technical cooperation projects carried out in recent years and those still in progress continue to yield encouraging results and to 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 recipient States.

3) The CTBTO and nuclear disarmament:

Mr. President,

For the Holy See, as highlighted in the recent addresses of Pope Francis, nuclear disarmament must be viewed from the position of the poor instead of the position of the powerful. Inequality and nuclear weapons are interwoven. “Spending

¹ Cf., Pope Francis, Encyclical Letter *‘Laudato Si’*, n. 102.

on nuclear weapons squanders the wealth of nations”.² Pope Francis continues: “To prioritize such spending is a mistake and a misallocation of resources which would be far better invested in the areas of integral human development, education, health and the fight against extreme poverty. When these resources are squandered, the poor and the weak living on the margins of society pay the price.”

The Holy See has no illusions about the challenges involved in achieving a world free of nuclear weapons. Progress has been made through the NPT, the CTBT, START, NEW START, unilateral initiatives and other measures. But these steps are limited, insufficient, and often frozen in space and time. Precisely because of growing tensions, the nuclear powers must renew arms control and disarmament processes: «Nuclear deterrence and the threat of mutually assured destruction cannot be the basis for an ethics of fraternity and peaceful coexistence among peoples and states».³

We recently commemorated the twentieth anniversary of the opening for signature of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT), one of the key agreements of the global security architecture to control the threat posed by nuclear weapons and to move progressively and urgently toward a world free of such weapons. In this regard, a very important sign would be to make real efforts towards facilitating the entry into force of the CTBT, which the Holy See considers as the best hope of stemming nuclear proliferation and which could be a key to progress on nuclear disarmament.

4) Verification and monitoring regimes:

Mr. President,

As I have said previously, the Holy See welcomes the IAEA’s participation in the verification and monitoring of Iran’s nuclear-related commitments under the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA). The Holy See values this agreement positively. If all parties keep to their commitments, this agreement will strengthen mutual trust and help to ensure the peaceful nature of Iran’s nuclear program under the NPT. Thus, it will ultimately contribute to greater peace and security in the region.

In a region where there are already too many conflicts, to reach an agreement on one sensitive issue is an important step that may promote dialogue and cooperation on other issues. In this respect, it is worth stating once again that the way towards resolving conflicts in the Middle East, which must be addressed at global and regional levels, is that of dialogue and negotiation, and not that of confrontation. It is true that this path requires courageous decisions for the good of all, but it is one that will eventually lead to the peace so desired in the region.

We view the situation in the DPRK with grave concern. The Holy See supports continued efforts by the international community to revive negotiations over denuclearization and to enable the IAEA to resume its critical role in nuclear verification there. Regional peace and stability and the integrity of the non-proliferation regime depend on it.

² Cf., Pope Francis, Message to the Vienna Conference on the Humanitarian Impact of Nuclear Weapons, 7 December 2014.

³ Cf. Pope Francis, *ibidem*.

5) An Ethic of responsibility and cooperative security:

Mr. President,

These and many other steps that must be taken will require the world to face a fundamental moral challenge. The logic of fear and mistrust must be replaced with a new global ethic. We need a global ethic of responsibility, solidarity, and cooperative security adequate to the task of controlling the power of nuclear technology.

All States have the right to and duty of ensuring national security. But reducing security, in practice, to its military dimension is an artificial simplification. Security also requires socio-economic development, political participation, respect for fundamental human rights and the rule of law, and cooperation and solidarity at the regional and international level. We consider it to be an urgent issue for States, especially for nuclear weapons states, to revisit their definition of national security and to carry out that process in a transparent manner. This process should refer not only to the military dimension, but also to economic-financial and ethical-historical aspects.⁴ In this regard, Pope Francis stated “The security of our own future depends on guaranteeing the peaceful security of others, for if peace, security and stability are not established globally, they will not be enjoyed at all.”⁵

Therefore, the Holy See believes that further reflection on the current state of the nuclear debate is needed. Although this would probably require a long term process, the Holy See is confident that such a reflection would advance an ethic of peace and multilateral security, moving beyond *fear* and mistrust towards strengthening dialogue and building up mechanisms of trust.

Mr. President,

In conclusion, I would like to reiterate the importance the Holy See places on the successful cooperation of the IAEA with other relevant International Organizations in ensuring the safe, secure and peaceful use of nuclear technologies. The IAEA deserves continued support as it seeks to fulfil, in ever more effective ways, its indispensable role in ensuring international security and building up a “social and international order in which [the] rights and freedoms” of all human persons can be fully realized.⁶ Finally, I would like to assure you, Mr. President, and the international community, of the Holy See’s full moral support for the fulfilment of a culture of life, peace and solidarity which can ensure a better tomorrow.

Thank you, Mr President.

⁴ *Gaudium et spes*: «Peace is not merely the absence of war; nor can it be reduced solely to the maintenance of a balance of power between enemies; nor is it brought about by dictatorship. Instead, it is rightly and appropriately called an enterprise of justice. Peace results from that order structured into human society by its divine Founder, and actualized by men as they thirst after ever greater justice» (n. 78); *Pacem in terris*: «The principle that peace is supported by an equilibrium of arms, is replaced with the principle that true peace can only be built upon mutual trust» (n. 61).

⁵ Message of Pope Francis to the aforementioned Vienna Conference, 2014.

⁶ Universal Declaration of Human Rights, Article 28.