



STATEMENT OF THE HOLY SEE

INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON NUCLEAR SECURITY:

COMMITMENTS AND ACTIONS

THE INTERNATIONAL ATOMIC ENERGY AGENCY

DELIVERED BY

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UNDER-SECRETARY FOR RELATIONS WITH STATES

**Vienna
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Mr. President,

I have the honour of conveying to you and to all the distinguished participants at this second International Conference on Nuclear Security of the International Atomic Energy Agency the best wishes and cordial greetings of His Holiness Pope Francis.

In his address to the United Nations General Assembly on 25 September 2015, Pope Francis 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.” The Holy See is, therefore, most pleased to attend this Conference, thereby lending its support to advancing nuclear security.

Mr. President,

The promotion of nuclear security – preventing, detecting and responding to criminal or intentional unauthorized acts involving, or directed at, nuclear material, other radioactive material, associated facilities or associated activities – is of significant importance to the Holy See. On the one hand, nuclear security advances peace and security by contributing towards strengthening the non-proliferation regime and making much-needed progress toward nuclear disarmament. On the other hand, nuclear security – so closely linked to nuclear safety and a broader “safety culture” – promotes social and scientific development by the peaceful application of nuclear technologies to promote sustainable development by improving agriculture, water management, nutrition and food safety, infectious disease control, and efforts to fight cancer.

Considerable progress has been made in strengthening nuclear security and safety: 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. The very existence and the professional activity of the International Atomic Energy Agency also constitute crucial aspects of the work towards nuclear safety, and the Holy See takes this opportunity to thank the Director General and the entire staff of the Agency for their labours in this regard.

At the same time, we should not be complacent. The promotion of nuclear security faces significant challenges, including the limited, insufficient and often stalled efforts to prevent proliferation and move toward a world free of nuclear weapons. Therefore, to respond adequately to the challenges of nuclear security,

the Holy See believes it to be essential that the international community embrace an ethic of responsibility, in order to foster a climate of trust, and to strengthen cooperative security through multilateral dialogue.

The logic of fear and mistrust that is epitomized by nuclear deterrence must be replaced with a new global ethic. We need an ethic of responsibility, solidarity, and cooperative security adequate to the task of controlling the power of nuclear technology. Threats to nuclear security represent serious technical and diplomatic challenges. These must be tackled by addressing the wider security, political, economic and cultural dynamics that lead state and non-state actors to seek security, legitimacy, and power in nuclear weapons. Therefore, the critically important work of strengthening nuclear security must be done in the context of much broader efforts to promote 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.

Among the particular fields where increased efforts are necessary, my Delegation would emphasise two:

1) The physical protection of nuclear material: ensuring that nuclear and other radioactive material is safely contained must remain central for the work of nuclear security, as failure to control nuclear material could have catastrophic consequences.

2) Counteracting insider threats as well as preventing cyber attacks on sensitive data and facilities: increasing attention has to be paid to the strengthening of information security and computer security as well as to ensuring the confidentiality of information which pertains to nuclear security.

On both issues, it must be recalled that although the responsibility for maintaining effective nuclear security of all nuclear and radioactive material within a State rests primarily with that State, cooperation between States is essential as so many threats to nuclear security do not respect borders and are facilitated by the political instability and crises that sadly plague numerous parts of our world. The Holy See is, therefore, pleased that great efforts have been made by the IAEA and its member states to strengthen the security regime, to assign a high priority to it and to improve and complement the regulations and the legal framework for it. These efforts have to be continued.

Mr. President,

Much of the IAEA's success in fulfilling its responsibilities depends on the commitment of Member States to live up to their legal and ethical obligations. Therefore, the responsibilities of the Member States must remain at

the heart of our discussions. This burden of responsibility falls most heavily, of course, on those Member States that possess nuclear capacity, especially those with nuclear weapons.

In conclusion, the Holy See would like to point out that it has no illusions about the challenges that lie before the international community. However, it is precisely because of these challenges related to nuclear security that the Holy See wishes to reiterate its support for the IAEA as it seeks to fulfil, in ever more effective ways, its indispensable role in ensuring nuclear security as part of a wider effort to strengthen cooperative security. As Pope Francis has said, “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.”¹

Thank you, Mr President.

¹ Message of Pope Francis to the aforementioned Vienna Conference, 2014.