



**STATEMENT OF THE HOLY SEE  
TO THE 64<sup>th</sup> GENERAL CONFERENCE  
OF THE INTERNATIONAL ATOMIC ENERGY AGENCY**

**DELIVERED BY  
HIS EXCELLENCY  
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SECRETARY FOR THE HOLY SEE'S RELATIONS WITH STATES**

Vienna  
21 September 2020

Mr. President,

I have the great honour of conveying to you and to all the distinguished participants at this 64<sup>th</sup> General Conference of the International Atomic Energy Agency, the best wishes and cordial greetings of His Holiness Pope Francis.

On behalf of the Delegation of the Holy See, I congratulate you and the members of the Board on your election by this distinguished Conference. I would also like to take the opportunity to express our appreciation and gratitude to Director General Rafael Mariano Grossi and to the Secretariat for their dedicated work for the benefit of the whole IAEA family.

Mr. President,

This unprecedented pandemic sheds new light on the interdependence between Nations and, in particular, on the necessity to consider health as a primary common good, which requires solidarity and coordinated action at the global level<sup>1</sup>.

The Holy See commends and supports the many activities of the IAEA that strengthen international cooperation, including the IAEA Zoonotic Disease Integrated Action (ZODIAC) project. This important global network is crucial to helping national laboratories in monitoring, surveillance, early detection and control of animal and zoonotic diseases such as COVID-19, Ebola, Avian Influenza and Zika. The current COVID-19 pandemic has exposed problems related to virus detection capabilities in many countries, as well as the need for better communication between health institutions around the world. We believe that ZODIAC can improve the existing strong collaboration of the unique joint FAO/IAEA laboratories and other partners. It is desirable that ZODIAC also supports Research and Development (R&D) activities for novel technologies and methodologies for early detection and surveillance.

As Pope Francis has stated, we have to pass through “the night of a world already faced with epochal challenges and now oppressed by a pandemic severely testing our whole human family.”<sup>2</sup> This pandemic highlights “[...] the real priorities facing our human family, such as the fight against poverty, the promotion of peace, the undertaking of educational, ecological and healthcare projects, and the development of fundamental human rights [...]”<sup>3</sup>.

A world of peace, free from nuclear weapons, is the aspiration of millions of men and women everywhere. However, authentic and lasting international peace cannot rest on a balance of military power, but upon mutual trust. “This trust can be built only through dialogue that is truly directed to the common good and not to the protection of veiled or particular interests; such dialogue, as far as possible, should include all: nuclear states, countries which do not possess nuclear weapons, the military and private sectors, religious communities, civil societies, and international organizations.”<sup>4</sup> Humanity, at its best, has the ability to use its intellect for the common

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<sup>1</sup> Cf. Statement of the Holy See to the 73<sup>rd</sup> World Health Assembly, 18 May 2020.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. Pope Francis, *Urbi et Orbi* Message, 12 April 2020.

<sup>3</sup> Cf. Pope Francis, Message to the International Symposium on the Prospects for a World Free of Nuclear Weapons and for Integral Disarmament, 10 November 2017.

<sup>4</sup> Cf. Pope Francis, Message to the United Nations Conference to Negotiate a Legally Binding Instrument to Prohibit Nuclear Weapons, Leading Towards Their Total Elimination, 27 March 2017.

good. Such dialogue needs to take place without polarization and recrimination, and in a spirit of concern for our common home.

“There is a need to break down the climate of distrust that risks leading to a dismantling of the international arms control framework”<sup>5</sup>. The Holy See remains concerned about the worrying signs of an erosion of multilateralism and of the rules-based order, especially in the control and ban of nuclear weapons. This can be seen particularly in the lapse of the Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces Treaty, in the fact that the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty has still not entered into force, and by the lack of progress within the Conference on Disarmament. However, we cannot lose hope in the face of these obstacles, and we must continue to work towards our common goal of the elimination of nuclear weapons.<sup>6</sup>

The Holy See recognizes the important contribution of the IAEA in working for a world free of nuclear weapons. This role is characterized by the effective combination of measures available under the comprehensive safeguards agreements (CSAs) together with various additional protocols (APs). Furthermore, efforts to ensure nuclear safety and security, as well as to foster a culture of safety have been greatly improved due to IAEA’s strategies of strengthening global, regional, and national networks and fora, and by expanding capability and capacity in nuclear, radiation, transport and waste safety, including in emergency preparedness and response. The broader goals of nuclear non-proliferation, nuclear disarmament, and the peaceful uses of nuclear technologies, depend upon these crucial IAEA strategies.

In addition, the Holy See would like to express its gratitude and appreciation to the Agency for developing strategies to establish and enhance radiotherapy programmes, for helping low and middle income Member States to improve the effectiveness of their radiation medicine services as part of a comprehensive cancer control strategy, for supporting the training of health professionals, and for engaging in fundraising to boost cancer control programmes and activities.

The Holy See also recognizes and welcomes the IAEA’s support to countries using nuclear science and technology to monitor emissions and environmental changes to the ocean and ecosystems, to mitigate sources of greenhouse gas emissions from energy production and land use, and to adapt to new climate realities including food and water shortages and ecosystem losses.

Mr. President,

In conclusion, the Holy See reiterates its sincere gratitude and affirms its unwavering support for the IAEA’s many contributions to nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament, as well as to the safe, secure, and peaceful, development and operation of nuclear technologies.

Thank you.

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<sup>5</sup> Cf. Pope Francis, Address on Nuclear Weapons, Atomic Bomb Hypocenter Park in Nagasaki, 24 November 2019.

<sup>6</sup> Cf. Holy See Statement to the 74<sup>th</sup> United Nations General Assembly High-Level Plenary Meeting - International Day for the Total Elimination of Nuclear Weapons, 26 September 2019.