



**STATEMENT OF THE HOLY SEE
TO THE 65th GENERAL CONFERENCE
OF THE INTERNATIONAL ATOMIC ENERGY AGENCY**

DELIVERED BY

H.E. Mrs Francesca DI GIOVANNI

Under-Secretary for the Multilateral Affairs
Section for Relations with States

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Mr President,

I have the great honour of conveying to you the best wishes and cordial greetings of His Holiness Pope Francis.

On behalf of the Delegation of the Holy See, I congratulate you on your election by this distinguished Conference. I thank Director General Rafael Mariano Grossi, and all IAEA staff, for their dedicated work to curb the spread of nuclear weapons and to make peaceful nuclear technology available for the benefit of all humankind.

Throughout the world, it is the poorest and most vulnerable of our brothers and sisters who suffer most from the effects of the pandemic, as well as from hunger, disease and the growing impact of climate change. All of us have a responsibility to promote a culture of care, which places human dignity and the common good at the centre of everything we do.

Mr President,

We appreciate the successful efforts of this Agency to continue to provide its important services to Member States despite the considerable disruption caused by the Covid-19 pandemic.

The Holy See encourages all countries to support the IAEA Zoonotic Disease Integrated Action project (ZODIAC), which will assist countries in their research and development activities and provide expert guidance, as well as technical, scientific and laboratory support.

The Holy See values the unique work of the IAEA, which enables developing countries to use nuclear technology to treat cancer, grow more food, and to manage and protect their water supplies – only a few of the many areas in which the Agency provides invaluable support.

The Agency also continues to make relevant contributions in the area of climate change, monitoring pollution of the ocean and ecosystems, and help countries adapt to new climate realities, including food and water shortages. The Holy See is committed to promoting education in integral ecology, and to promoting political and technical measures united with an educational process that favours a cultural model of development and sustainability based on fraternity and the alliance between the human being and the environment¹.

¹ Cf. Pope Francis, Message to the High-Level Virtual Climate Ambition Summit, 12 December 2020.

We commend Director General Grossi for launching the IAEA Nuclear Technology for Controlling Plastic Pollution project.

The Holy See recognizes the unique role of the IAEA with regard to the non-proliferation of nuclear weapons through its programme of safeguards, thereby verifying that nuclear materials are not diverted from peaceful purposes. When countries open their nuclear facilities to inspectors under comprehensive safeguard agreements and additional protocols, they help to build confidence and reduce suspicion. In this way, the Agency contributes significantly to creating a world free of nuclear weapons. The Agency's important role in establishing and maintaining the world's five nuclear-weapons-free zones, to which 114 States now belong, should also be acknowledged.

Mr President,

Pope Francis has repeatedly condemned the possession of nuclear weapons as immoral and called for the establishment of a nuclear-weapon-free world, as “[w]eapons of mass destruction, particularly nuclear weapons, create nothing but a false sense of security”².

He has also called on world leaders to take the courageous decision to use money spent on weapons for a global fund to eliminate hunger and contribute to the development of poorer countries³.

Thank you.

² 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.

³ Cf. Pope Francis, Video Message for the World Food Day 2020, 16 October 2020.