



**STATEMENT OF THE HOLY SEE
TO THE 66th 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
AND THE INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS**

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Mr. President,

I have the great honour of conveying to you, and to all the distinguished participants at this 66th General Conference of the International Atomic Energy Agency, the best wishes and cordial greetings of His Holiness Pope Francis.

On behalf of the Holy See, I congratulate you and the members of the Board on your election by this Conference. I also express our gratitude to Director General Rafael Mariano Grossi and to the Secretariat for their dedicated work for the benefit of the whole IAEA family. We particularly appreciate the Director General's tireless efforts to help secure the safety and security of nuclear facilities in Ukraine and prevent what Pope Francis recently called "a nuclear disaster."

The Holy See, also congratulates Saint Kitts and Nevis, as well as Tonga on becoming members of the IAEA.

Mr. President,

Amid the dreadful conflicts and unrest which we witness in many parts of the world, and in face of the continuing escalation of the war in Ukraine, with words and actions that risk to leave less space for diplomatic solutions, we must never abandon the search for dialogue. Let us pursue it with firm and unshakeable determination, and without restrictions. Dialogue can nourish critical, rational and objective thinking. It helps us to counter false beliefs and prejudices. It is a process that allows us to consolidate the foundations of human coexistence, to identify and promote the common good, in knowledge and full respect of differences. The Holy See appeals to all nations to foster, through collective and joint commitment, a culture of care, which places human life and dignity at the centre.

At this moment of great uncertainty, when the world seems to be at a crossroads, and the threat with the use of nuclear weapons has come back to haunt us, the Holy See appeals to all nations to silence all weapons and eliminate the causes of conflicts through tireless recourse to dialogue and negotiation. As Pope Francis warned us earlier this year, "Those who wage war [...] forget humanity!"¹.

The Holy See has no doubt that a world free from nuclear weapons is both necessary and possible. This common goal was underlined by Pope Francis, when he emphasized that nuclear weapons exist "in the service of a mentality of fear that affects not only the parties in conflict but the entire human race. International relations cannot be held captive to military force, mutual intimidation, and the parading of stockpiles of arms. Weapons of mass destruction, particularly nuclear weapons, create nothing but a false sense of security. They cannot constitute the basis for peaceful coexistence between members of the human family, which must rather be inspired by an ethics of solidarity"².

¹ Cf. Pope Francis, *Angelus*, 27 February 2022.

² Pope Francis, Address to Participants in the International Symposium on "Prospects for a World Free of Nuclear Weapons and for Integral Disarmament", 10 November 2017.

The Holy See signed and ratified the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons with the aim of moving beyond nuclear deterrence to a world entirely free of nuclear weapons, affirming that nuclear weapons are arms of mass and environmental destruction.

In the face of the very slow progress being made on the disarmament agenda, especially on nuclear disarmament, we might be tempted to lose hope. However, we must not be deterred by setbacks. We must press ahead with perseverance and determination in our common efforts to achieve the elimination of nuclear weapons. We must make every effort to avoid dismantling the international architecture of arms control, especially in the field of weapons of mass destruction.

The world needs to find a way to prevent unleashing the destructive power of nuclear weapons while enabling all people to share in the great benefits of the peaceful uses of nuclear technology – in health care, food production and many other areas.

Mr. President,

The Holy See recognizes the important contribution of the IAEA in helping to achieve a world free of nuclear weapons. Comprehensive safeguards agreements between the IAEA and nearly 180 countries, many of which are also implementing additional protocols, help to provide assurance that these countries are not working on clandestine nuclear weapons programmes. This builds confidence and trust, while also serving the broader goal of nuclear non-proliferation. It also helps create a foundation for international cooperation in peaceful nuclear technology and for sharing its benefits with developing countries.

The Holy See supports the IAEA's work to verify and monitor compliance with nuclear-related commitments under the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPoA). We also welcome the continued and patient efforts of the international community to revive negotiations concerning the nuclear programme of the DPRK, which threatens the integrity of the non-proliferation regime. There can be no military solution to these issues. IAEA safeguards are an essential contribution to promoting peace and security and help to build a climate of confidence in place of mutual recriminations. The unique IAEA safeguards system constitutes an important tool in moving towards the goal of nuclear weapons free world.

Mr. President,

The climate change emergencies and COVID pandemic have had not only environmental, but also ethical, social, economic and political consequences. They cause great suffering to the poorest and most vulnerable of our fellow human beings.

The Holy See favours a model of development and sustainability based on fraternity and the alliance between the human being and the environment³.

The IAEA, by helping developing countries to use nuclear technology to treat cancer, grow more food and manage scarce water supplies, plays a unique role in promoting integral development, enhancing our stewardship of God's creation.

The Holy See also welcomes the IAEA's support to countries in using nuclear science and technology to monitor environmental pollution. The IAEA's expert assistance is helping the world to adapt to new climate realities, including food and water shortages and ecosystem losses.

The Holy See particularly appreciates the Agency's work to enable low- and middle-income countries to develop comprehensive cancer control strategies and ensure that, in time, all patients will have access to radiotherapy and nuclear medicine.

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 use of nuclear technology.

Thank you.

³ Cf. Pope Francis, Message to the High-Level Virtual Climate Ambition Summit, 12 December 2020.