



STATEMENT OF THE HOLY SEE
TO THE 61st GENERAL CONFERENCE
OF THE INTERNATIONAL ATOMIC ENERGY AGENCY

DELIVERED BY

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Madam President,

I have the honour of conveying to you and to all the distinguished participants at this 61st General Conference of the International Atomic Energy Agency the best wishes and cordial greetings of His Holiness Pope Francis.

Madam President, on behalf of the Delegation of the Holy See, I congratulate you on your election as President of this distinguished Conference. I would also like to take this opportunity 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, and congratulates Director General Amano on his appointment for a further four-year term.

On this occasion, the Holy See, along with various states, congratulates Grenada on being approved for membership of the IAEA.

Madam President,

The Holy See commends and supports all the activities of the IAEA, which for six decades has done so much to prevent nuclear proliferation and promote nuclear disarmament, and to foster integral human development through international cooperation in the peaceful use of nuclear technologies. I will briefly address four aspects of IAEA's important work.

1) The link between non-proliferation and disarmament:

IAEA safeguards are an indispensable component of the nuclear non-proliferation regime. The IAEA's participation in the verification and monitoring of Iran's commitments under the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) contribute to greater peace and security in the Mideast.

Of utmost concern is the nuclear programme of the DPRK, which threatens peace and security in the region, as well as the integrity of the non-proliferation regime. There is no military solution to this threat. As difficult as they might be, the Holy See supports continued and patient efforts by the international community to revive negotiations over denuclearization and to enable the IAEA to resume its critical role in nuclear verification there.

As the international community addresses these and other challenges to the non-proliferation regime, it must work equally tirelessly for nuclear disarmament. For that reason, in July, the Holy See supported the negotiations and adoption of the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons, as a step toward moving beyond nuclear deterrence to a world without nuclear weapons.¹

¹ Cf. Pope Francis, Message to the United Nations Conference to Negotiate a Legally Binding Instrument to Prohibit Nuclear Weapons, Leading Towards their Total Elimination. 23 March 2017.

By its safeguard activities, the Agency makes an important contribution to this ultimate goal.

2) Peaceful nuclear energy, nuclear weapons and development:

The “First International Conference on Applications of Radiation Science and Technology” (ICARST 2017), which took place in April, and the Technical Cooperation Conference in May highlighted the need to strengthen partnerships to build upon IAEA’s already considerable achievements in promoting peaceful nuclear energy and technologies that promote integral development and enhance our stewardship of God’s creation. IAEA technical cooperation projects in the fields of human health, agriculture, nutrition, food safety, animal health, pest management, drinking water, environmental protection, and other matters have contributed to the alleviation of poverty and the ability of countries to meet their development goals in a sustainable way.

As we consider the contributions to development of the peaceful use of nuclear technologies, we must not ignore the negative impact of nuclear weapons on the poor. Through the eyes of the poor we can see more clearly how inequality and nuclear weapons are interwoven. As Pope Francis has said, squandering resources on nuclear weapons is “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.”²

3) Nuclear safety and security:

The IAEA’s role in promoting nuclear safety and security is also of essential importance, especially in view of political instabilities and crises in several countries and regions. Efforts to ensure nuclear safety and a safety culture have been greatly improved due to IAEA’s publications, peer-review missions, trainings, and other programs. The important “International Conference on Nuclear Security: Commitment and Actions”, which took place in Vienna in December 2016, proved the leading role of the IAEA as the global platform for strengthening nuclear security. The broader goals of nuclear non-proliferation, nuclear disarmament, and the peaceful uses of nuclear technologies each depend upon nuclear security.

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

4) Cooperative security

A new global ethic of responsibility, solidarity, and cooperative security must replace the ethics of isolationism, self-interest, and fear.³ Security is not a zero-sum game; our own peace and security depends on guaranteeing the peace and security of others.⁴ The Holy See, therefore, appeals to all political leaders to collaborate in good faith on what should be common goals of promoting nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament, the peaceful use of nuclear technologies, and integral human development, especially in the poorest countries, all of which are required for true and lasting peace.

Madam President,

In conclusion, the Holy See reiterates its gratitude and continued support for the IAEA's many contributions to non-proliferation, disarmament, and the safe, secure and peaceful uses of nuclear technologies.

Thank you.

³ Cf., Pope Francis, Message to the United Nations Conference to Negotiate a Legally Binding Instrument to Prohibit Nuclear Weapons, Leading Towards Their Total Elimination, 23 March 2017.

⁴ Cf., Pope Francis, Message to the Vienna Conference on the Humanitarian Impact of Nuclear Weapons, 7 December 2014.