



SALA STAMPA DELLA SANTA SEDE **BOLLETTINO**

HOLY SEE PRESS OFFICE BUREAU DE PRESSE DU SAINT-SIÈGE PRESSEAMT DES HEILIGEN STUHLS
OFICINA DE PRENSA DE LA SANTA SEDE SALA DE IMPRENSA DA SANTA SÉ
BIURO PRASOWE STOLICY APOSTOLSKIEJ دار الصحافة التابعة للكرسي الرسولي

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Intervention by the Secretary for Relations with States at the 73rd Session of the United Nations General Assembly on the International Day for the Total Elimination of Nuclear Weapons

The following is the intervention pronounced by H.E. Msgr. Paul Richard Gallagher, secretary for Relations with States, head of the Holy See Delegation, yesterday in New York, at the 73rd Session of the United Nations General Assembly on the theme *The International Day for the Total Elimination of Nuclear Weapons*:

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Intervention by H.E. Paul Richard Gallagher

Mr. President,

The International Day for the Elimination of Nuclear Weapons is an affirmation of our common determination to create conditions and steps necessary for the total elimination of nuclear weapons. We must never resign ourselves to the idea that nuclear weapons are here to stay. We must not lend credence to the idea that contemporary threats to international peace and security do not allow for nuclear disarmament. The world is not safer with nuclear weapons; it is more dangerous. A policy that relies on the possession of nuclear weapons is contradictory to the spirit and purpose of the United Nations because nuclear weapons cannot create for us a stable and secure world, and because peace and international stability cannot be founded on mutually assured destruction or on the threat of total annihilation.

The Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons is an important step in our efforts toward a nuclear-free world. Sixty-one States have signed it, fourteen of which have already ratified it. The Holy See, who signed and ratified it on the very day it was opened for signature and ratification on 20 September 2017, wishes to urge others to sign and ratify it. It will be a strong component of the nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament regime once it enters into force. Every signature, every ratification of this Treaty constitutes an important step toward the achievement of a nuclear-free world.

The Treaty is the fruit of the efforts of many States and other stakeholders to promote greater awareness and understanding of the humanitarian consequences and environmental disasters that would result from the use of

nuclear weapons. The catastrophic impacts of nuclear weapons are foreseeable and frightening. The victims of these weapons are still with us: the Hibakusha are a living testimony to the horrors that nuclear weapons can unleash. They continue to challenge us to recognize that the total elimination of nuclear weapons is not only a security issue, but a moral, humanitarian and environmental imperative.

The Holy See wishes to urge all countries to make the Comprehensive Nuclear Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT) a reality by ensuring its entry into force. To ensure that no States can conduct nuclear weapons tests is an essential step to stop the development of even more lethal nuclear weapons and a vital advance toward achieving a nuclear-free world. The responsibility falls on all of us to continue to persuade those States whose ratification is necessary for the CTBT to enter into force of the fundamental importance of ratifying it for world peace.

Both the Treaty for the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons and the CTBT complement the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT). They aim to help to achieve the commitment of all Parties enshrined in Article 6, that “Each of the Parties of the Treaty undertakes to pursue negotiations in good faith on effective measures relating to cessation of the nuclear arms race at an early date and to nuclear disarmament, and on a treaty on general and complete disarmament under strict and effective international control.” Today, we must recommit ourselves to a world without nuclear weapons, by fully implementing the NPT.

The Holy See has been a Party to the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) since the very beginning, in order to encourage nuclear possessing States to abolish their nuclear weapons, to dissuade non-nuclear possessing States from acquiring or developing nuclear capabilities, and to encourage international cooperation on the peaceful uses of nuclear material. While firmly believing that the NPT remains vital to international peace and security, the Holy See will continue to argue against both the possession and the use of nuclear weapons, until the total elimination of nuclear weapons is achieved.

The entry into force of the CTBT and the full implementation of the NPT can only happen if mutual trust exists. Disarmament treaties are more than just legal obligations; they are also moral commitments based on trust between States and rooted in the trust that citizens place in their governments. In the case of the NPT, non-nuclear States bind themselves to nuclear non-proliferation, trusting that nuclear weapons States pursue negotiations in good faith toward nuclear disarmament. If commitments to nuclear disarmament are not made in good faith and consequently result in breaches of trust, the proliferation of such weapons would be the logical corollary.

Indeed, this trust has been seriously eroded by both the recent lack of progress in nuclear disarmament and by the decision of some States to develop nuclear weapons capabilities. There is therefore greater urgency that we must continue to restore and strengthen mutual trust, for only through such trust can true and lasting peace among nations be established. Trust can bring us back to the path of meaningful dialogue and negotiation toward a world free of nuclear weapons.

Mr. President,

The desire for peace, security and stability is one of the deepest longings of the human heart. This peace is not the illusion of peace that the threat of the use of nuclear weapons creates. We must therefore never cease to pursue this demanding and forward-looking objective of the total elimination of nuclear weapons, until the day that our world will at last be free from them, and the authentic peace that the human heart longs for will have the chance to be attained and enjoyed by all.

Thank you, Mr. President.
