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Sommario:

♦ **Intervento di S.E. Mons. Paul Richard Gallagher, Segretario per i Rapporti con gli Stati e le Organizzazioni Internazionali in occasione dell'ottantesima Assemblea Generale delle Nazioni Unite**

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Pubblichiamo di seguito l'intervento che S.E. Mons. Paul Richard Gallagher, Segretario per i Rapporti con gli Stati e le Organizzazioni Internazionali, pronuncia in occasione dell'ottantesima Assemblea Generale delle Nazioni Unite:

Intervento di S.E. Mons. Paul Richard Gallagher

Statement by His Excellency Archbishop Paul Richard Gallagher

Secretary for the Relations with States and International Organizations

Head of the Delegation of the Holy See

at the General Debate of the High-Level Week at the Opening of the 80th Session of the United Nations General Assembly

New York, 29 September 2025

Better Together: 80 years and more for peace, development and human rights.

Madam President,

I am pleased to convey the warm greetings and blessings of Pope Leo XIV to you and the representatives of the Nations gathered here, and to congratulate you on your election to lead this assembly.

At the outset, I would like to thank this General Assembly for the tribute paid to Pope Francis following his demise last April.

As you may all know, when Pope Leo XIV was elected, his first words to the World were “Peace be with you all. [...] A peace that is unarmed and disarming, humble and persevering.”[1] In a world torn by wars and conflicts, he made peace to be his first message.

Madam President,

The theme chosen for this year’s General Debate: “Better Together: Eighty Years and More for Peace, Development and Human Rights” highlights the ongoing importance of multilateral cooperation in addressing global issues. This is particularly pertinent this year as the international community commemorates the establishment of the United Nations in 1945. It is an opportune moment to reaffirm the Organization’s core values of fostering international peace, development and universal human rights – values that are all the more important in an increasingly fragmented world.

It is crucial for the international community to take collective action to prevent and end conflicts, combat poverty and advance human rights, solemnly declared in the 1948 Universal Declaration, and one of the most important achievements of this Organization. It is important to remember that isolationism leads to unpredictable instability, whereas unity fosters responsible resilience and shared progress. This is strikingly evident in the current circumstances, where escalating geopolitical tensions, a raging climate crisis, widening inequalities and rising poverty demand renewed global solidarity. The United Nations must adapt itself to a transformed world and maintain its effectiveness in the face of emerging threats such as environmental degradation and technological disruption, which no single country can tackle alone.

As representatives of all the nations of the globe, we are united by our shared humanity, created in the image and likeness of God, called to live in fraternity, solidarity, and mutual respect. Guided by the timeless teachings of the Catholic Church, the Holy See intends to remain a voice for the voiceless, advocating for a world where peace prevails over conflict, justice triumphs over inequality, rule of law supersedes power, and where truth illuminates the path to authentic human flourishing.

In a world grappling with mounting challenges, it is necessary to recommit to the foundational pillars of Peace, Justice, and Truth.[2] It is imperative to explore and build on these pillars, while drawing lessons from history to forge a more equitable future.

Madam President,

Peace

Peace is both universal and fundamental to a well-ordered, values-based society. Peace is not the mere absence of war or conflict. It cannot be reduced exclusively to maintaining a balance of power between adversaries. Rather, it is rooted in mutual respect and on a proper understanding of the human person, necessitating the establishment of an order based on justice and charity. Pope Leo XIV describes peace as “an active and demanding gift. It engages and challenges each of us, regardless of our cultural background or religious affiliation, demanding first of all that we work on ourselves. Peace is built in the heart and from the heart, by eliminating pride and vindictiveness and carefully choosing our words. For words too, not only

weapons, can wound and even kill.”[3]

A peaceful and prosperous society can be built through a constant daily commitment to restoring the order intended by God, which flourishes when each person recognizes and assumes his or her role in promoting it. To prevent conflict and violence, peace must be deeply rooted in the heart of every individual, so that it can spread through families and the various associations within society, until the entire political community is involved. Only in a context characterized by respect for justice, it becomes possible to develop a culture of authentic peace that can influence the entire international community. Indeed, “peace on earth cannot be obtained unless personal well-being is safeguarded and men freely and trustingly share with one another the riches of their inner spirits and their talents.”[4]

Peacemaking requires the rejection of hatred and vengeance in favor of dialogue and reconciliation. “Never before has it been more urgent than it is now for us to become peacemakers working for the common good, for what is good for all and not just for the few”.[5] The Holy See commends those who build bridges across divides through non-violent means. Their courageous acts illuminate the path to fraternity, through which all are called to be artisans of peace in a culture of encounter.

The international community must therefore prioritize diplomacy over division, redirecting resources from instruments of war to initiatives that promote justice, dialogue and the uplifting of the poor and of those most in need. The Holy See renews its proposal for a global fund, sustained by a fraction of military expenditures, to eradicate poverty and hunger, promote sustainable development and address climate change.[6] These are indispensable foundations of lasting peace.

Disarmament

One of the first steps towards achieving peace is the building trust. Massive rearmament undermines this goal, as it creates new threats and exacerbates people’s fears. In fact, “no peace is possible without true disarmament [and] the requirement that every people provide for its own defense must not turn into a race to rearmament.”[7] The continuous growth of global military expenditures reaching an unprecedented \$2.72 trillion in 2024,[8] perpetuates cycles of violence and division diverting resources from the urgent needs of the poor and those in vulnerable situations.

Disarmament is not merely a political or strategic necessity, but, above all, a moral imperative, rooted in the recognition of the sacredness of human life and the interconnectedness of the human family. It is of great concern that a number of States are withdrawing their commitments to international disarmament treaties. The Holy See urgently calls upon the international community not to lose sight of the importance of pursuing multilateral disarmament agreements, and of striving to reduce stockpiles of conventional and nuclear arms, as well as to tirelessly work to strengthen non-proliferation mechanisms and to foster confidence-building measures to guarantee a common security.

The Holy See thus calls for the full implementation and the strengthening of the legal regimes set forth by States party to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT), the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBTO) and the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons (TPNW). Furthermore, nuclear possessing States should take concrete steps to reduce their nuclear stockpiles, halt the modernization of their arsenals, and foster transparent dialogue to build trust among Nations. Resources should be redirected towards education, healthcare, and sustainable development, with the ultimate goal of achieving a nuclear-free world.

The production and stockpiling of nuclear weapons is a grave offense against peace, as it diverts resources from promoting integral human development towards instruments of destruction. It is estimated that there are over 12,000 warheads worldwide, with a combined explosive power of 1.5 gigatons, which is equivalent to more than 100,000 Hiroshima-type bombs.

80 Years Since the First Nuclear Test and Hiroshima

This year marks 80 years since the first nuclear test in 1945, as well as the dramatic atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. These events that scarred humanity and exposed the fragility of our shared existence highlight the moral imperative of the urgent need for nuclear and general disarmament. The Holy See has no doubts that a world free from nuclear weapons is both necessary and possible. The recourse to such armaments is always disproportionate and therefore immoral. Furthermore, no just or reasonable motive can justify possessing such weapons given their annihilating power and the associated risks. The Holy See is convinced that their possession and use is dangerous, a threat to humanity and deeply immoral and therefore “must be considered an illegal means of warfare.”[9] Meanwhile, the “response to the threat of nuclear weapons must be joint and concerted, inspired by the arduous yet constant effort to build mutual trust and thus surmount the current climate of distrust.”[10]

Respect for International Humanitarian Law

In a world thorn by wars and conflicts respect for international humanitarian law constitutes another pillar of peace since it safeguards human dignity amid armed conflicts. Violations – such as attacks on non-combatants, hospitals, schools and churches – are grave war crimes. Sadly, we are also “currently witnessing with despair the iniquitous use of hunger as a weapon of war”. [11]

“The mere fact that war has regrettably broken out does not mean that everything becomes licit between the warring parties.”[12] It should be clear that military personnel remain fully responsible for any violation of the rights of individuals and peoples, or of the norms of international humanitarian law. Such actions cannot be justified by obedience to orders from superiors. Those enlisted in the armed forces are expected to uphold the principles of good faith, truth and justice on a global scale. Many are those who, in such circumstances, have sacrificed their lives for these values and in defense of innocent lives.[13]

Pope Leo XIV has lamented that “it is troubling to see that the force of international law and humanitarian law seems no longer to be binding, replaced by the alleged right of the stronger to impose themselves without limits. This is unworthy of our humanity, shameful for all mankind and for the leaders of nations. After centuries of history, how can anyone believe that acts of war bring about peace and not backfire on those who commit them?”[14]. The Holy See urges all States to ensure full implementation of and respect for the Geneva Conventions, and calls for education on the principles of international humanitarian law, training for armed forces, and punishment of violators. In this context, the Holy See acknowledges the immense challenges faced by humanitarian workers, including threats to their safety, restricted access to those in need, and inadequate resources.

Madam President,

Freedom of Religion and Persecution of Christians

Freedom of thought, conscience and religion is another cornerstone of peace, yet persecution of religious minorities, particularly Christians, persists globally. Christians across the world are subjected to severe persecution, including physical violence, imprisonment, forced displacement, and martyrdom. Over 360 million Christians live in areas where they experience high levels of persecution or discrimination, with attacks on churches, homes, and communities intensifying in recent years. Data show that Christians are the most persecuted group globally, yet the international community seems to be turning a blind eye to their plight.

However, freedom of religion is not simply freedom from persecution; it is a freedom to profess one's faith either alone or in a community with others, in public or private, in teaching, practice, worship and observance. Religious freedom encompasses other freedoms, including freedom of thought, conscience, expression, assembly and association. For religious freedom, which is willed by God and inscribed in human nature, to be exercised, there should be no obstacles in its way. In fact, each and every person, endowed with reason and free will, has a moral obligation to seek the Truth, and, once it is known, to adhere to it and to order his or her lives in accordance with its demands.[15] The dignity of the individual and the nature of the quest for the ultimate truth require that everyone should be free from constraints regarding religion. Society and the State must not

force someone to act against his or her conscience, nor prevent anyone from acting in accordance with it.

60 Years Since *Nostra Aetate*

Religious freedom goes hand in hand with interreligious dialogue, and while the former is the responsibility of the States, the latter is the responsibility of religions. Any interference by an authority in interreligious dialogue is a breach of the freedom of religion. Interreligious dialogue is not merely an exchange of ideas but a shared journey towards mutual respect, justice, and peace. In a world scarred by religious extremism, cultural polarization, and conflicts often fuelled by misunderstanding, such dialogue is a moral imperative. It requires humility, openness, and a commitment to active listening to ensure that differences enrich rather than divide. It is also necessary to protect religions from exploitation and instrumentalization.

The Holy See is at the forefront of religious dialogue, and this year it is marking the 60th anniversary of *Nostra Aetate*, the landmark declaration of the Second Vatican Council on the relation between the Catholic Church and non-Christian religions. Promulgated on 28 October 1965, *Nostra Aetate* was a transformative call to reject prejudice and embrace the universal dignity of every human person, created in the image and likeness of God. It paved the way for a new era of understanding, particularly in Catholic-Jewish relations, and promoted respect for all religious traditions. Over the past six decades, the principles of *Nostra Aetate* have inspired countless initiatives for dialogue, reconciliation, and cooperation, ranging from interreligious meetings to joint efforts to address global challenges such as poverty, migration, and climate change.

Madam President,

Justice: Safeguarding Dignity and Promoting the Common Good

Pope Leo XIV affirms clearly that “working for peace requires acting justly. [...] In this time of epochal change, the Holy See cannot fail to make its voice heard in the face of the many imbalances and injustices that lead, not least, to unworthy working conditions and increasingly fragmented and conflict-ridden societies. Every effort should be made to overcome the global inequalities – between opulence and destitution – that are carving deep divides between continents, countries and even within individual societies.”[16]

Dignity of the Human Person

In our troubled world, the dignity of the human person must be placed at the centre of all our endeavours. The dignity of each individual is inherent and not contingent upon utility or circumstance, and must therefore be upheld in every policy, law, and action. This principle compels the rejection of all forms of exploitation, discrimination, and violence, which dehumanize and fracture our global family. Instead, it is an obligation to uphold the fundamental human rights and freedoms as enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

The Holy See urges the international community to renew its commitment to fostering conditions where human dignity can flourish. This includes ensuring access to basic needs such as food, clean water, shelter, health-care, and education, as well as protecting the poor and those in need, including refugees, migrants, and those persecuted for their beliefs.

This also means defending the right to life of every person. Having witnessed the horrors of war and the consequences of those who claim omnipotence by deciding over the life and death of their brothers and sisters, the founders of the United Nations rightly affirmed that no power can stand above the inherent dignity and sanctity of human life. The Holy See is and has always been unwavering in its support and promotion of the right to life, from conception to its natural end, as a fundamental prerequisite to the exercise of all other rights, and emphasizes the illegitimacy of every form of procured abortion and of euthanasia. Rather than promoting a culture of death, resources should be allocated to protecting life and helping those facing difficult or even tragic situations to make life-affirming decisions, including by enabling those mothers to give birth to the child in their womb. Moreover, resources should be allocated to ease the burden of human suffering during illness through

adequate health and palliative care. It should be clear that there is only a right to life, and that no opposite to this can ever exist, even if it is falsely flagged as freedom.

Indeed, when freedom shuts out even the most obvious evidence of an objective and universal truth, which is the foundation of personal and social life, then the person ends up by his subjective and changeable opinion or interest. This view of freedom leads to a serious distortion of life in society. At that point, everything becomes negotiable and open to bargaining, even the first of the fundamental rights, the right to life.[17]

Another issue that endangers the inviolable dignity of human beings by reducing them to mere products is the practice of so-called surrogate motherhood, which represents a grave violation of the dignity of the woman and the child. The Holy See renews its call for an international ban of this deplorable practice.

True progress is not measured by power or wealth, but by uplifting the least privileged in society while safeguarding the God-given dignity of every person. As Pope Leo XIV reminds us, “no one is exempted from striving to ensure respect for the dignity of every person, especially the most frail and vulnerable, from the unborn to the elderly, from the sick to the unemployed, citizens and immigrants alike.”[18]

The Rule of Law

Ten years ago, from this very rostrum, Pope Francis reminded us that “the work of the United Nations, according to the principles set forth in the Preamble and the first Articles of its founding Charter, can be seen as the development and promotion of the rule of law, based on the realization that justice is an essential condition for achieving the ideal of universal fraternity.”[19]

Indeed, in order to be just, a society must be based on the principle of the Rule of Law, whereby the law and not the arbitrary will of individuals, is sovereign.[20] In fact, as Saint Augustine noted some 1600 years ago, that if justice is removed, the great kingdoms of the world are nothing more than gangs of criminals.[21]

In practical terms, the rule of law involves the idea of restraining the exercise of power. No individual or group, regardless of his or her status, should claim the authority to violate the dignity and rights of others or of their communities. Therefore, the principles of equality before the law, accountability, the equitable application of the law, the separation of powers, legal certainty, due process, the prevention of arbitrariness, as well as transparency in both procedural and legal matters, must always be observed.

Eradication of Poverty and Hunger

Eradication of poverty and hunger is a moral obligation rooted in the inherent dignity of every human person, created in the image and likeness of God. Poverty is not merely a lack of material resources, but also an assault on human dignity that deprives individuals of the God-given potential to flourish.

As Pope Leo XIV affirms, “the continuing tragedy of widespread hunger and malnutrition, which persists in many countries today, is sadder and more shameful when we realize that, although the earth is capable of producing enough food for all human beings, and despite international commitments to food security, it is unfortunate that so many of the world’s poor still lack their daily bread.”[22] “The key to overcoming hunger lies in sharing rather than in greedily hoarding. This is something we may have forgotten today because, although some significant steps have been taken, global food security continues to deteriorate, making it increasingly unlikely that the ‘Zero Hunger’ goal of the 2030 Agenda will be achieved. [...] Producing food is not enough: it is also important to ensure that food systems are sustainable and provide healthy and affordable diets for all. It is therefore a matter of rethinking and renewing our food systems, from a perspective of solidarity, overcoming the logic of the savage exploitation of creation and better guiding our efforts to cultivate and care for the environment and its resources, to ensure food security and move towards sufficient and healthy nutrition for all.”[23]

In a world of unprecedented wealth and technological advancement, it is unacceptable that millions still lack

access to basic necessities. The persistence of extreme poverty, particularly in regions afflicted by conflict, climate change and systemic inequality, demands immediate and collective action. The Holy See calls upon the international community to prioritize integral human development in a spirit of solidarity, ensuring that economic policies and development programmes place the human person at their core and foster not only material well-being but also spiritual and social growth.

In the fight against poverty, the principle of solidarity must always be accompanied by that of subsidiarity. This allows the spirit of initiative to flourish, forming the basis of all social and economic development in poor countries. The poor should be seen “not as a problem, but as people who can become the principal builders of a new and more human future for everyone”.^[24]

Global Disparities and Debt Cancellation

Overcoming global disparities, whether economic, social or environmental, is a serious challenge. The Holy See emphasises that every individual, created in the image and likeness of God, is entitled to the resources and opportunities necessary for a dignified life. However, vast inequalities in wealth, access to education, healthcare, food security and safe living conditions persist, often exacerbated by systemic injustice, conflict and environmental degradation.

Therefore, it is indispensable to address their structural causes, including unjust trade systems, exploitative labour practices and unequal access to resources. Debt burdens trap nations in poverty, and must be cancelled as a matter of justice. Moreover, providing debt relief to the poorest nations, ensuring the fair distribution of global goods and investing in sustainable development are all essential steps toward justice.

In this Jubilee year that is being celebrated by the Catholic Church, the Holy See appeals “to the most affluent nations [...] to acknowledge the gravity of so many of their past decisions and determine to *forgive the debts* of countries that will never be able to repay them. More than a question of generosity, this is a matter of justice. It is made all the more serious today by a new form of injustice which we increasingly recognize, namely, that a true ‘ecological debt’ exists, particularly between the global North and South, connected to commercial imbalances with effects on the environment and the disproportionate use of natural resources by certain countries over long periods of time”.^[25]

Care for creation and the climate crisis

Taking the ecological debt seriously is also an issue of ‘environmental justice’, which “can no longer be regarded as an abstract concept or a distant goal. It is an urgent need that involves much more than simply protecting the environment. For it is a matter of justice – social, economic and human.”^[26]

The international community needs to continue the important work of caring for creation.^[27] The need to persevere in this mission has become all the more apparent in the ten years since Pope Francis published the Encyclical letter *Laudato si’* on Care for Our Common Home, and the international community adopted on 12 December 2015 the Paris Agreement on climate.

We are living in a geopolitical context characterized by intense conflict and a crisis of multilateralism on the one hand, and a climate crisis with evident and significant impacts on those most vulnerable to climate change, the poorest and the future generations, who are also the least responsible.

Pope Leo XIV writes that “Extreme natural phenomena caused by climate changes provoked by human activity are growing in intensity and frequency, to say nothing of the medium and long-term effects of the human and ecological devastation being wrought by armed conflicts. As yet, we seem incapable of recognizing that the destruction of nature does not affect everyone in the same way. When justice and peace are trampled underfoot, those who are most hurt are the poor, the marginalized and the excluded. The suffering of indigenous communities is emblematic in this regard”.^[28]

This poses a clear threat to the wellbeing of future generations, and peace and security. It requires a strong, responsible response and commitment by the international community. A response that cannot reduce nature “to a bargaining chip, a commodity to be bartered for economic or political gain.”[29]

This means reinforcing the commitment to international cooperation in promoting technological sharing and implementing climate action, as well as strengthening efforts to promote education for a culture of care that proposes new ways of living.

Migrants and Refugees

Migrants are among the first victims of multiple global disparities. Not only is their dignity denied in their home countries, their lives are also put at risk as they no longer have the means to start a family, to work, or to feed themselves. The response to the crises of migration, refugees, and displacement should transcend purely political considerations and embrace an ethical, humanitarian, and solidarity-based approach.

The Holy See emphasizes that the inherent human dignity of migrants, refugees, and internally displaced persons (IDPs) must be upheld regardless of their legal status, nationality, ethnicity, religion or sex. Policies and actions must prioritize their safety, protection and humane treatment, adhering to the principle of non-refoulement and implementing measures to prevent violence and exploitation. In this context, priority should be given to family reunification, recognizing the vital role of the family in human development, psychological health, and social stability.

To reduce the dangers associated with irregular migration, the Holy See urges the expansion of safe, orderly, and regular migration channels to counter the activities of human smugglers and traffickers, preventing perilous and often deadly journeys. The Holy See strongly condemns the heinous crime of human trafficking, and earnestly hopes for consensus around the Political Declaration at the forthcoming High-level Meeting to review the Global Plan of Action to Combat Trafficking in Persons.

Furthermore, the Holy See hopes that the Second International Migration Review Forum, will reaffirm the commitments set out in the Global Compact on Migration. Similarly, the Global Refugee Forum Progress Review in December 2025 should reinforce existing commitments to ensure that progress in supporting refugees continues.

Artificial Intelligence (AI)

Together with these challenges, there is, as Pope Leo XIV says “another industrial revolution [...] artificial intelligence that poses new challenges for the defence of human dignity, justice and labour.”[30] In Christian tradition, intelligence is considered an essential aspect of humanity, created in the image of God. While AI is an extraordinary technological achievement, it imitates the human intelligence that designed it, posing new philosophical and ethical questions. Unlike other inventions, AI is trained on human creativity, produces artefacts that rival or surpass human capabilities, raising concerns about its potential impact on humanity. In fact, this technology learns and makes choices autonomously, adapting and providing results that were not foreseen by its programmers. This raises fundamental questions about ethics and safety.

There is a risk that AI will promote the ‘technocratic paradigm’, which views all of the world’s problems as being solvable through technology alone. This paradigm often subordinates human dignity and fraternity in the pursuit of efficiency, disregarding the essential dimensions of goodness and truth. However, human dignity must never be violated for the sake of efficiency. Instead, AI should be used to promote and serve a healthier, more human, more social integral development.

Despite the immense potential that AI offers for advancing human well-being, AI cannot ever end up supplanting human moral and ethical judgment or diminishing the unique value of the person.

The Holy See underscores the need to develop and implement clear ethical guidelines and regulatory frameworks for AI that safeguard human dignity, ensure transparency, promote accountability, and foster inclusion.

Rights of Workers

Furthermore, the widespread use of AI puts many workers at risk of losing their jobs. Work is not merely a means of sustenance but a vocation through which individuals participate in God's creative act, develop their talents, and build a just society.

Work is a fundamental expression of human dignity. It enables individuals to provide for their families, contribute to society, and grow in virtue. All work should be recognized as honorable, whether manual, intellectual, or creative, and no worker should be subjected to conditions that degrade their God-given dignity.

Workers have the right to a living wage that ensures a decent standard of living for themselves and their families. This includes access to housing, education, healthcare, and opportunities for rest. Wages must reflect the value of the human person and not be driven solely by market forces. Employers must reject exploitative practices that prioritize profit over justice and guarantee equal pay for equal work.

The Holy See condemns all exploitative practices that subject workers to excessive toil, hazardous conditions, or treatment that violates their dignity as persons.

There is a need for an economic system that prioritizes job creation, particularly for the unemployed and underemployed, and fosters opportunities for entrepreneurship. When economies fail to generate sufficient employment, there is a moral obligation to protect the dignity of workers and their families by providing social support and implementing equitable policies.

Investment in the Family

Fair wages and sustainable working conditions, especially for women, also help to build up the family. The family does not exist for society or the State, but society and the State exist for the family. The Holy See therefore calls for a renewed commitment to supporting those young people who wish to build a family. In a world where division prevails, the marriage covenant between a man and a woman is a means to overcome the forces that break down relationships and societies. The family is the first community in which human social nature is experienced, and it makes a unique and irreplaceable contribution to society.

Truth: Guiding Multilateralism and Clarity in Discourse

Unambiguous and Non-Divisive Language

True relationships and dialogue require clear and unambiguous language. In fact, where language is not commonly agreed or is reinterpreted or becomes ambiguous, efforts for dialogue may be put in jeopardy. Many attempts have been made to reinterpret the fundamental human rights contained in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Regrettably, these new interpretations not only divide the international community but often also distort the view of human nature. In today's context, where there is a desperate need for multilateral dialogue among Nations, mutual respect and understanding require the use of a clear and non-divisive language.

PARTICULAR SITUATIONS

Ukraine

Madam President,

Of the many crises currently affecting the international community, the war in Ukraine is one of the most profound and painful. Its prolonged existence is turning once-vibrant cities into piles of rubble and extinguishing the smiles of children who should be growing up playing games instead of living amid the constant sound of sirens and in shelters.

This war must end now. Not at some undefined moment in the future, but right now. With each passing day, the number of victims increases, the destruction widens and the hatred deepens. Every day without peace steals something from all of humanity.

For this reason, the Holy See renews the appeal made by Pope Leo XIV for an immediate ceasefire, which will pave the way for sincere and courageous dialogue. It is only through this that clamour of weapons can be silenced and the voices of justice and peace allowed to be heard.

The Holy See calls upon all nations gathered here to reject passivity and provide tangible support for any initiative that could lead to genuine negotiations and lasting peace. The time has come to stand up for peace and reject the logic of dominance and destruction.

Middle East

The Holy See is paying close attention to the situation in the Middle East with a view to achieving a just and lasting peace between Israel and Palestine based on a two-State solution, in accordance with international law and all relevant United Nations resolutions.

Pope Leo XIV strongly urges the parties involved, as well as the international community, to put an end “to the conflict in the Holy Land, which has caused so much terror, destruction, and death.” He implored “that all the hostages be freed, that a permanent ceasefire be reached, that the safe entry of humanitarian aid be facilitated, and that humanitarian law be fully respected, especially the obligation to protect civilians as well as prohibitions of collective punishment, indiscriminate use of force, and the forced displacement of the population.”[31]

Moreover, an equitable solution to the issue of Jerusalem based on international resolutions is essential for achieving a just and permanent peace. Any unilateral decision or action which alters the special status of Jerusalem and the *status quo* is morally and legally unacceptable.

Syria

With regard to Syria, the Holy See supports the importance of a peaceful and just transition in the country, as well as the protection of the rights of Syrians of all ethnic and religious backgrounds, without discrimination. Syria’s independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity must be fully respected, in accordance with international law.

Africa

The Holy See notes positively that democracy in many countries in Africa is showing signs of progress: there is a growing commitment to multiparty elections, civic participation, and institutional reforms. However, significant obstacles remain, such as authoritarianism, arbitrary constitutional reforms, and endemic corruption, which fuel mistrust in institutions. The instability afflicting many African States generates profound and interconnected challenges, with serious social, economic, and humanitarian repercussions. Forced migration, internal displacement, and the collapse of essential services deprive millions of people of security, health, and education, while youth unemployment fuels the informal economy and, in some cases, recruitment into armed groups. Women and children, in particular, suffer violence and exploitation of all kinds.

In this scenario, the Sahel, Cabo Delgado, and some areas of the Horn of Africa emerge as zones of instability. In fact, the jihadist threat, endemic poverty, illicit trafficking, the climate crisis, and internal conflicts converge in a

spiral that puts the lives of millions of people at risk, despite the efforts of local governments. School dropouts caused by the security crisis expose many minors to serious dangers, compromising the future of the continent and fostering new forms of marginalization.

In the face of these challenges, the resilience of African communities, especially young people, remains an essential resource that must be supported with targeted investments in education, health, infrastructure, and inclusive governance models.

More than ever, a coherent and lasting commitment by the international community is essential, based on genuine cooperation, respect for local needs, and shared responsibility, to support African countries on their path to stability, peace, and economic development.

Democratic Republic of the Congo

The deterioration of the situation in eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) is a source of concern for the Holy See. The provinces of Ituri, North Kivu and South Kivu are experiencing ethnic tensions, violence perpetrated by rebel groups, armed clashes, serious human rights violations, and disputes over the exploitation of natural resources. The country has been facing one of the world's most complex multidimensional crises for years, characterized by an unstable security situation and an increasingly severe humanitarian emergency involving acute malnutrition and mass displacement.

The Holy See welcomes the signing of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement between the DRC and the M23 armed group, as well as the Peace Agreement signed by the Congolese and Rwandan foreign ministers, which aims to end the decades of fighting in the east of the country. However, new waves of violence are feared. Last July the Allied Democratic Forces (ADF) carried out a brutal terroristic attack on a church in Komanda, Ituri, resulting in the death of more than 40 worshippers. The withdrawal of the United Nations Organisation Stabilisation Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO) raises questions about its ability to fulfil its mandate and address ongoing challenges.

It is essential to strengthen the support of the international community and diplomatic and political mediation efforts to ensure that the parties fulfill their commitments and find a stable and appropriate solution to the ongoing situation.

Sudan

The fratricidal conflict in Sudan, is also a source of grave concern, since it continues to cause death and destruction, inflicting suffering on the civilian population. The Holy See strongly renews its appeal for an immediate cessation of hostilities and the commencement of genuine negotiations – the only means by which all Sudanese people can forge a future of peace and reconciliation. Those involved must understand that the time for responsibility, concrete action and solidarity is now. They must promote dialogue between the parties and take urgent action to alleviate the ongoing humanitarian crisis. The pain of the Sudanese people cries out to be heard, piercing the world's silence of the world. There is no more space for indifference.

South Sudan

The Holy See is monitoring developments in South Sudan closely and is calling on all political actors to commit to the path of dialogue and collaboration, and to implement the 2018 Peace Agreement with sincerity and responsibility, as the foundation for building peaceful and just coexistence. The Holy See also invites the international community to support this young nation generously on its path towards peace and reconciliation, and to provide the necessary humanitarian aid to alleviate the suffering of the population. This will contribute to building a future of hope and dignity for all South Sudanese people.

Drug trafficking

In many parts of the world, particularly in Latin America, drug trafficking is corroding societies and causing extreme violence. The Holy See is deeply concerned about this complex phenomenon, which is often linked to unresolved social issues in different countries. It includes the cultivation of coca, the production of synthetic hallucinogenic substances, and their commercialisation. These activities are carried out by criminal organisations that operate worldwide. Alongside joint efforts by States to combat drug trafficking, the Holy See emphasises the importance of investing in human development, such as education and job creation, to prevent people from unwittingly becoming involved.

Situation in the Caribbean

The Holy See is also worried about the rising tensions in the Caribbean Sea and is calling for restraint to prevent any actions that could destabilise the coexistence between nations and undermine international law.

Haiti

The dramatic situation in Haiti is also being closely followed by the Holy See. The country is plagued by violence of all kinds, human trafficking, forced exile and kidnappings. The Holy See hopes that, with the necessary and concrete support of the international community, the social and institutional conditions can be created to enable Haitians to progress towards peace and security.

Nicaragua

The Holy See is paying close attention to the situation in Nicaragua and hopes that religious freedom and other fundamental rights of individuals and society, will be adequately guaranteed. The Holy See reiterates the need for sincere, respectful and constructive engagement in dialogue aimed at finding solutions that will foster peace and harmony in the country.

South-Asia

Turning to Southeast Asia, numerous situations of instability and conflict are further exacerbating long-standing humanitarian concerns. In Myanmar four and a half years of internal conflict have left the local population devastated. In Rakhine State alone, over 2 million individuals are at risk of starvation, and the Rohingya population continues to suffer discrimination from armed groups and military authorities alike.

In this situation of enduring conflict, transnational crime is on the rise. Drug trafficking and use and human trafficking have seen a disturbing increase in Southeast Asia. The phenomenon of so-called scam centers, where trafficked individuals are forced to trick individuals online to send money to criminal networks, is particularly troubling. Recent investigations suggest that there are tens, if not hundreds, of thousands of trafficked individuals in these centers, located primarily along the borders between Myanmar, Thailand, China, Cambodia and Laos. This multi-billion-dollar industry creates millions of victims who fall prey to the scams that are perpetrated. Only by the concerted efforts of the international community can transnational crime be adequately addressed.

To ensure the common good of society, it is essential to uphold the rule of law. Maintaining justice, transparency and respect for civil and political freedoms are all the more important in periods of political transition.

In this context, international and regional solidarity is vital. The Holy See encourages the efforts of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), based on its principles of mutual respect, non-interference, consensus-building, and peaceful dispute resolution, to foster locally led and inclusive processes of peacebuilding.

Balkans

The Holy See is closely following developments in the Western Balkans, particularly in Bosnia and Herzegovina. The Balkan countries are connected to European values for historical and cultural and geographical reasons, and they aspire institutionally to integrate with States that already belong to the European Union. It is crucial that ethnic, cultural, and religious differences do not lead to division, but instead become a source of enrichment for Europe and the world as a whole. The Holy See maintains that the historical and current issues affecting the region can only be resolved through dialogue and collaboration.

Caucasus

The Holy See, while acknowledging the peace agreements between Armenia and Azerbaijan signed in August, invites the two countries to continue on the path of reconciliation in order to achieve stable and lasting peace in the South Caucasus.

Effective Multilateralism Based on Dialogue

Madam President,

On the occasion of the 80th anniversary of the United Nations, the Holy See reaffirms the enduring importance of this institution and the significant good it has accomplished across numerous fronts since its founding in 1945. The United Nations continues to be a vital forum in which all nations engage in dialogue as sovereign equals to address global challenges.

However, we must acknowledge the limitations and shortcomings of the United Nations, as well as the growing crisis of credibility within the multilateral system. Rather than overshadowing the UN's achievements these challenges should inspire a renewed commitment to its revitalization.

There is an increasing general agreement in the international community on the need to reform this institution by rediscovering its foundation and adapting it to reflect the needs of the current era. As Pope Leo XIV affirms, "this effort, in which all of us are called to take part, can begin to eliminate the root causes of all conflicts and every destructive urge for conquest. It demands a genuine willingness to engage in dialogue, inspired by the desire to communicate rather than clash. As a result, there is a need to give new life to multilateral diplomacy and to those international institutions conceived and designed primarily to remedy eventual disputes within the international community." [32]

The Holy See calls for a recommitment to the original principles enshrined in the UN Charter, which remain as relevant today as ever. It is important to resist the temptation to replace these foundational commitments with new ideas or programmes that risk diluting the UN's mission. Central to this mission is striking a balance between the four pillars of the United Nations: promoting of human rights, maintaining international peace and security, achieving sustainable development, and upholding rule of law. The rule of law, in particular, is the *sine qua non* of a just international order, providing the foundation for all other efforts.

This anniversary provides an opportunity to reinforce the United Nations' position as a beacon of hope and a force for good in addressing humanity's most urgent needs.

[01219-EN.01] [Original text: English]

[B0687-XX.01]

[1] Pope Leo XIV, First blessing “Urbi et Orbi”, 8 May 2025.

[2] Cfr. Pope Leo XIV, Address to the members of the Diplomatic Corps Accredited to the Holy See, 16 May 2025.

[3] Pope Leo XIV, Address to the members of the Diplomatic Corps Accredited to the Holy See, 16 May 2025.

[4] Vatican Council II, *Gaudium et Spes*, 77.

[5] Pope Leo XIV, Message to the participants in the 44th Session of the FAO Conference, 30 June 2025.

[6] Cfr. Pope Francis, *Spes non confundit*, 16; Pope Francis, Address to the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, 2 December 2023.

[7] Pope Francis, *Urbi et Orbi*, 20 April 2025.

[8] Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI). "World Military Expenditure Reaches \$2.72 Trillion in 2024." SIPRI, 2024. Available at: <https://www.sipri.org>.

- [9] Pope Francis, Address to the participants in The International Symposium “Prospects for a World Free of Nuclear Weapons And For Integral Disarmament”, 10 November 2017.
- [10] Pope Francis, Address on Nuclear Weapons, Atomic Bomb Hypocenter Park (Nagasaki), 24 November 2019.
- [11] Pope Leo XIV, Message to the participants in the 44th Session of the FAO Conference, 30 June 2025.
- [12] Vatican Council II, *Gaudium et Spes*, 79 §4.
- [13] Cfr. Compendium of the social doctrine of the Church, 502-503.
- [14] Pope Leo XIV, Address to Participant in the Plenary Session of the “Reunion of aid agencies for Oriental Churches” (ROACO), 26 June 2025
- [15] Cfr. Vatican II, *Dignitatis Humanae*, 2.
- [16] Pope Leo XIV, Address to the members of the Diplomatic Corps Accredited to the Holy See, 16 May 2025.

[17] Cfr. Pope John Paul II, *Evangelium Vitae*, 19-20

[18] Pope Leo XIV, Address to the members of the Diplomatic Corps Accredited to the Holy See, 16 May 2025.

[19] Pope Francis, Address to the United Nations General Assembly, 25 September 2015.

[20] Cf. Compendium of the social doctrine of the Church, 408.

[21] Saint Augustine, *De civitate Dei*, Book IV, Chapter 4: “*Remota itaque iustitia, quid sunt regna nisi magna latrocinia? Quid et ipsa latrocinia nisi parva regna?*”

[22] Pope Leo XIV, Message to the participants in the 44th Session of the FAO Conference, 30 June 2025.

[23] *Ibidem*.

[24] Pope John Paul II, Message for the World Day of Peace, 1 January 2000.

[25] Pope Francis, *Spes non confundit*, 16

[26] Pope Leo XIV, Message for the 10th World Day of Prayer for the Care of Creation, 1 September 2025.

[27] Cfr. Pope Leo XIV, Homily in the Holy Mass for the Care of Creation, Borgo Laudato si', 9 July 2025..

[28] Pope Leo XIV, Message for the 10th World Day of Prayer for the Care of Creation, 1 September 2025.

[29] *Ibidem*.

[30] Pope Leo XIV, Address to the College of Cardinals, 10 May 2025.

[31] Pope Leo XIV, General Audience, 27 August 2025.

[32] Pope Leo XIV, Address to the members of the Diplomatic Corps Accredited to the Holy See, 16 May 2025.

