



Statement by H.E. Archbishop Ivan Jurkovič, Permanent Observer of the Holy See
to the United Nations and Other International Organizations in Geneva at the
**Second Preparatory Committee of the 2020 Review Conference of the
Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons**
Geneva, 23 April 2018

Mr. Chair,

The Holy See Delegation congratulates you on your appointment as president of the Second Preparatory Committee of the 2020 Review Conference of the Treaty on Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT).

Confronted with the current situation of increasing international tensions and instability, the Holy See wishes to reiterate the firm conviction that “international relations cannot be held captive to military force, mutual intimidation, and the parading of stockpiles of arms.”¹ As we move towards the 2020 Review Conference, the Delegation of the Holy See appeals to the shared wisdom and good will of humanity to reaffirm disarmament and non-proliferation as an essential part of our agenda.

Weapons of mass destruction, particularly nuclear weapons, create a false sense of security. The tragic illusion of a “peace” based on fear is superficial at best. People aspire to true peace, which is the opposite of fear. This desire “is one of the deepest longings of the human heart. It is rooted in the Creator who makes all people members of the one human family. This desire can never be satisfied by military means alone, much less the possession of nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction.”²

Mr. Chair,

Non-proliferation and disarmament are not only ethical responsibilities but moral and legal obligations towards each member of the human family. They are, in a sense, two sides of the same coin, mutually reinforcing and complementary.

However, the continued existence of nuclear weapons, their modernization and development of ever more powerful ones, disseminates discord with their proliferation. Nuclear weapons contribute to foster a mentality of fear, violence and dominance, that has an impact on the entire human family. It is an unfortunate irony that we have a full adherence in the rightful condemnation of other weapons of mass destruction, while, on the other side, we find complacency over the continued possession and massive modernizations of nuclear weapons.

¹ Pope Francis, Address to participants in the International Symposium “Prospects for a world free of nuclear weapons and for integral disarmament”, 10 November 2017.

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

Pope Francis repeatedly reminds us that there is a deep connection between all things and everyone. It is deceptive to think that the security and peace of some is indivisible from the collective security and peace of others. In a united family of nations, increasingly interdependent, national security interests are inevitably connected to those related to international security. Short-sighted approaches to national security and double standards have undermined unity and progress, damaging the original trajectory, letter and spirit of the NPT.

Nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation are linked to integral disarmament and this is linked to integral human development, which Pope Paul VI defined as “another name for peace”. Poverty reduction strategies cannot be pursued apart from disarmament and peace efforts. The arms race, the modernization and development of nuclear arsenals, infrastructures and delivery systems, deny the poor and disadvantaged of the resources needed to reduce poverty and to foster integral human development.

Imagine if all the resources that have been squandered and that are being poured into the modernization and maintenance of nuclear weapons could be invested in addressing poverty, inequality, injustice, education, health and environmental degradation!

In November, last year, the Holy See convened an international Symposium on a world free from nuclear weapons to explore and strengthen these connections between integral disarmament and integral human development. In addressing the participants, Pope Francis expressed concern over the catastrophic humanitarian consequences and environmental impact of the use of nuclear weapons, as well as the risk of accidental detonation as a result of error of any kind, not only condemning the threat of their use but their very possession as well.³

Mr. Chair,

When the Holy See acceded to the NPT in 1971, it appreciated and fully shared the considerations expressed in the Preamble on the awareness of the “the devastation that would be visited upon all mankind by a nuclear war and the consequent need to make every effort to avert the danger of such a war and to take measures to safeguard the security of peoples.”⁴ Sadly, these considerations ring ever more urgent today.

In “the belief that justice, right reason, and the recognition of man’s dignity cry out insistently for a cessation to the arms race,”⁵ the Holy See ratified the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons concluded last year under the auspices of the United Nations. This Treaty, based on the preoccupations for the catastrophic humanitarian consequences of nuclear weapons as well as their threat to humanity and all life on earth, showed how lively the desire for true peace really is. The Delegation of the Holy See wishes to remind that both this Treaty and the NPT are inspired and driven by the very same moral imperatives and objectives. In this regard, they mutually reinforce and complement each other.

Mr. Chair,

³ Cf. Pope Francis, Address to participants in the International Symposium “*Prospects for a world free of nuclear weapons and for integral disarmament*”, 10 November 2017.

⁴ Holy See’s declaration upon accession to the NPT, 25 February 1971.

⁵ Pope Francis, Address to the Diplomatic Corps accredited to the Holy See, 8 January 2018.

The illusion of safety in nuclear strength is contradicted by the dangerous and haunting realities of nuclear threats and proliferation. This was, after all, the original letter and spirit of the NPT. To achieve the goal of a world free of nuclear weapons through irreversible, verifiable and universal nuclear disarmament, we must free the human heart from fear and seething animosities. Nuclear weapons should find no place in military arsenals, but above all, their use should find no place in our hearts and minds.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.