



**STATEMENT OF THE HOLY SEE  
TO THE 58<sup>TH</sup> GENERAL CONFERENCE  
OF THE INTERNATIONAL ATOMIC ENERGY AGENCY**

**DELIVERED BY  
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RELATIONS WITH STATES**

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Mr President,

I have the honour of conveying to you and to all the distinguished participants at this 58<sup>th</sup> General Conference of the International Atomic Energy Agency the best wishes and cordial greetings of His Holiness Pope Francis. At the same time, it is my pleasure to congratulate you, Mr President, on behalf of the Delegation of the Holy See, 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 for the benefit of the whole IAEA family.

On this occasion, the Holy See, along with various states, welcomes and congratulates the Union of Comoros, the Republic of Djibouti, the Co-operative Republic of Guyana and the Republic of Vanuatu on becoming members of the IAEA family.

Mr President,

The Holy See commends and supports all the activities of the IAEA which contribute to authentic human development and foster peace and prosperity throughout the world. Nuclear technology can be applied to many areas of the development of the human person. The use of nuclear and radiation techniques by the IAEA, as shown in its projects of technical cooperation, is particularly praiseworthy. Such techniques are aimed at continually improving conditions of life for great numbers of people, especially in the developing countries, while also offering the education needed to form professionals. The contribution of the IAEA to human development is evidenced, among other things, in the areas of agriculture, food safety, quality of nutrition, the fight against devastating pests, the management of scarce water resources, the efforts to monitor environmental pollution and the research undertaken to minimize such pollution. Undoubtedly the greatest contribution of the IAEA to the development of the human person has been the successes witnessed in the field of health care, and the Agency continues to attach special importance to this assistance. For instance, the application of radiation techniques — from the use of X-rays to the utilization of technically highly advanced particle accelerators — has revolutionized the diagnosis and treatment of many diseases; the Programme of Action for Cancer Therapy (PACT) provides vital equipment for radiation therapy in a number of developing countries in the fight against cancer; and essential dosimetry services help improve the safe application of ionizing radiation and bring advanced training to medical doctors, physicists and dosimetrists. In recognizing all these significant achievements of the Agency, the Holy See believes that an improved public awareness and recognition of such contributions would come about through a greater use of the modern means of communication and a deeper cooperation with civic and political authorities.

Mr President,

We believe that the activities I have mentioned are compatible with Pope Francis' call for fraternity, which he articulated in his 2014 Message for the World Day of Peace. There he expounded upon this important means to achieve peace. He wrote:

“Fraternity is an essential human quality, for we are relational beings. A lively awareness of our relatedness helps us to look upon and to treat each person as a true sister or brother; without fraternity it is impossible to build a just society and a solid and lasting peace... In this sense, effective policies are needed to promote the principle of *fraternity*, securing for people - who are equal in dignity and in fundamental rights - access to capital, services, educational resources, healthcare and technology so that every person has the opportunity to express and realize his or her life project and can develop fully as a person” (1; 5).

Mr President,

Speaking of lasting peace as a common good that the entire human family can only benefit from, we wish to reiterate that the prevention of the proliferation of nuclear weapons is paramount for all humankind. Yet the attaining of this objective cannot be the final word with regard to peace: special emphasis must be given to worldwide nuclear disarmament. This must be a goal for all states, especially for those who possess nuclear weapons or who want to develop or acquire them. Furthermore it is a goal which ought not to be considered unrealistic. The reality of peace unquestionably requires a change of course which can be accomplished by decision-making which is clear and firm, and by a willingness to seek and achieve nuclear disarmament. As in years past, the Holy See urges governments and scientific experts engaged in the field of military defence to work strenuously towards such disarmament. These concerted efforts, fostered by sincere negotiation and strengthened by a fulfilment of contractual obligations, must be founded on due respect for the fundamental rights of all persons and on mutual trust.

Earlier this year, referring to non-proliferation and disarmament, Pope Francis stated:

“As long as so great a quantity of arms are in circulation as at present, new pretexts can always be found for initiating hostilities. For this reason, I make my own the appeal of my predecessors for the non-proliferation of arms and for disarmament of all parties, beginning with nuclear and chemical weapons disarmament. We cannot however fail to

observe that international agreements and national laws — while necessary and greatly to be desired — are not of themselves sufficient to protect humanity from the risk of armed conflict. A conversion of hearts is needed which would permit everyone to recognize in the other a brother or sister to care for, and to work together with, in building a fulfilling life for all” (2014 Message of His Holiness Francis for the Celebration for the World Day of Peace, 7).

Mr President,

A world free of weapons of mass destruction is the final aim of this process of disarmament. The task is one that is all the more pressing for people who suffer the dire consequences of war and terrorism. It is also widely recognized that nowadays the risk of nuclear weapons being used is growing throughout the world due to three factors: the first, proliferation of such weapons; second, the vulnerability of nuclear command and control networks to cyber-attacks or human error; third, the possibility of nuclear weapons being accessed by non-state actors, terrorist groups in particular. My delegation considers it necessary for governments and politicians to do all that is within their power to establish a zone free of nuclear weapons and weapons of mass destruction in the Middle East Region.

Nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation is a cause that must be taken up by all states, especially those in possession of nuclear weapons. From a humanitarian point of view, we are all acutely aware of just how catastrophic and irreversible the consequences of any use of these weapons would be. This year we commemorate the hundredth anniversary of the beginning of the First World War and the seventy-fifth of the Second World War, both of which unleashed unprecedented levels of violence on a global scale, causing millions of deaths, inflicting untold injury and bringing vast destruction. The use of an atomic weapon brought awful consequences that are still being felt today. Modern nuclear weapons, significantly more powerful than those used in 1945, are able to annihilate the whole human race either by direct impact or by the disastrous aftermath of such attacks. We therefore support the view that the mere existence of these weapons is absurd and that arguments in support of their use are an affront against the dignity of all human life. Our conviction largely hinges on the vastness of damage and appalling consequences that could come from a nuclear explosion and a sobering assessment of the immense resources required to maintain and modernize nuclear arsenals. This is why the Holy See continues to support all efforts to ensure peace and bring about the conditions that foster it. Among such efforts, particular attention must be given to those initiatives which relate to the impact of nuclear weapons in the humanitarian sector. We applaud and commend Austria’s gesture of hosting the Third

Conference on the Humanitarian Impact of Nuclear Weapons, due to take place later this year. It goes without saying, furthermore, that the coming into force of the Comprehensive Nuclear Test-Ban Treaty, and the achievement of a comprehensive outcome in the 2015 Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) Review Conference, represent vital steps towards the goal of nuclear disarmament. We deeply hope that, together, the international community will find the wisdom, courage and conviction to renew the process of disarmament.

Mr President,

Among the principal functions and tasks of the IAEA, those that must be emphasized are: the reinforcement of nuclear security; the verification of compliance by member states to Safeguard Agreements; the commitment to uncover clandestine nuclear programs; the monitoring of nuclear material assigned for peaceful use; and the verification of the absence of clandestine activities which contradict peaceful objectives. By carrying out all these tasks, the Agency contributes to a deeper trust among states with regard to their nuclear programs.

Since the accident at the Fukushima Daiichi power plants in March 2011, there has been great interest around the whole world in ensuring the enhancement and improvement of nuclear safety. This is the path that must be pursued: doing everything humanly possible to prevent accidents at nuclear facilities and minimizing any consequences should an accident occur.

The delegation of the Holy See also wishes to encourage and support the efforts and innovative approaches that concern the management and safe disposal of radioactive waste, especially the long-lived and high-level waste which poses a particular threat. Pioneering projects are an important contribution to the safety and security of the populations as well as to the protection of the environment, both now and for the future.

Finally, I wish to reiterate that the Holy See attaches great importance to the successful cooperation of the IAEA with other UN Organizations such as the WHO and the FAO. This year the Joint FAO/IAEA Division will celebrate its 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary. By combining the resources and strengths of both organizations, as evidenced by the effective application of nuclear technology and biotechnology to agricultural sectors, much progress has been made to offer the means of living to many people, especially in the poorest regions of the world. We are confident that this cooperation will be further developed and intensified for the benefit of many.

Thank you, Mr President!